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OF THE

# TEXAN SANTA FÉ EXPEDITION.

COMPRISING

A TOUR THROUGH TEXAS,

WITH

AN ACCOUNT OF THE DISASTERS THAT THE EXPEDITION  
ENCOUNTERED FOR WANT OF FOOD, AND  
BY ATTACKS OF INDIANS :

THE FINAL CAPTURE OF THE TEXIANS, AND THEIR  
SUFFERINGS AS PRISONERS IN MEXICO.

By GEORGE W. KENDALL.

*A New Edition,*

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

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## P R E F A C E .

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**VERY** few narratives of personal adventure can compete in interest with "**KENDALL'S TEXAN SANTA FÉ EXPEDITION.**" Seldom has an adventure over the trackless prairies of America been undertaken on so grand a scale as by the Texan caravan, and certainly none has been presented to us with greater vigour and truth of narrative and description. The wild sports of the prairies, the hostile encounters with roving Indian tribes, the dangers from famine, fire, and flood, are succeeded by the hardships of a long and cruel captivity ; but through all the excitements of the earlier days of the expedition, and the harassments and horrors of the late period of its progress, the writer keeps up his elasticity of spirits, and affords us many a laugh amid circumstances that would seem to present no food for mirth.

With respect to the objects of the expedition, and the special pleading by which the author attempts to justify such

an armed visitation of a neighbouring territory, we must leave our readers to form their own opinions. We confess that to ourselves, it appears in the light of a respectable piece of buccaneering; and with all commiseration for the gallant Texan band, we cannot (except in the case of some gratuitous pieces of cruelty from one or two blood-thirsty leaders) participate in the indignation so natural to one of the sufferers.

At the present moment, this work will be read with increased interest, as the result of this expedition led to the admission of Texas into the Union of the States; and if the present hostile aspect of affairs in the West should break out into war, historians will have to turn, for the causes of that war, to the book now before the reader.

# NARRATIVE

## OF THE

# TEXAN SANTA FÉ EXPEDITION.

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## CHAPTER I.

**Objects of the first Texan Santa Fé Expedition.—The Western Limits of Texas.—Her claim to the Rio Grande.—Preparations for joining the Texans.—Captain Wright's Specific against Thirst.—Arrival at Galveston.—Frank Combs.—City of Houston.—Houston Horse Jockeys.—Choice of an Animal.—Race with a Thunder Shower.—Arrival at Austin.—Mr. Falconer.—Jim the Butcher sent to the Stable.—Mexican Mountain Pony.**

“WHAT were the objects of the Santa Fé Expedition?” and, “What induced *you* to accompany it?” are questions that have been so often asked me, that I cannot carry my reader a single mile upon the long journey before us, until they are answered. Without preamble, or preface, then, I will to the task.

In the early part of April, 1841, I determined upon making a tour of some kind upon the great Western Prairies, induced by the hope of correcting a derangement of health, and by a strong desire to visit regions inhabited only by the roaming Indian, to find new subjects upon which to write, as well as to participate in the wild excitement of buffalo-hunting, and other sports of the border and prairie life.

The determination to take an excursion of this kind once made, my next object was to fix upon the route. The prairies west of St. Louis, the hunting-grounds of the Pawnees and other savage tribes, had been explored by Charles Augustus Murray, and described by his graphic pen; here was no new opening. Again, M. C. Field, one



of my assistants in the "Picayune," had made the journey to Santa Fé by way of Independence, Missouri, and a series of articles written by him, upon the subject of his adventures, had found favour in the eyes of the public, being much copied into other journals. Here was another beaten and well-known road; yet I determined to traverse it if no other offered.

About the 1st of May, of the same year, a number of young gentlemen of my acquaintance set on foot the project of an excursion to the prairies and buffalo-grounds, taking either Fort Towson or Fort Gibson in the route, and roaming through the Osage country, and over a part of that section visited by Washington Irving in his foray upon the prairies. While canvassing the chances and merits of a trip of this kind, I met with Major George T. Howard, then in New Orleans purchasing goods for the Texan Santa Fé Expedition.

Of the character of this enterprise I at once made inquiry. Major Howard informed me that it was commercial in its intentions, the policy of the then President of Texas, General Mirabeau B. Lamar, being to open a direct trade with Santa Fé by a route known to be much nearer than the great Missouri trail. To divert this trade was certainly the primary and ostensible object; but that General Lamar had an ulterior intention—that of bringing so much of the province of New Mexico as lies upon the eastern or Texan side of the Rio Grande, under the protection of his government—I did not know until I was upon the march to Santa Fé. He was led to conceive this project by a well-founded belief that nine tenths of the inhabitants were discontented under the Mexican yoke, and anxious to come under the protection of that flag to which they really owed fealty. I say a well-founded belief; the causes which influenced him were assurances from New Mexico—positive assurances—that the people would hail the coming of an expedition with gladness, and at once declare allegiance to the Texan government.

With the proofs General Lamar had that such a feeling existed in New Mexico, he could not act otherwise than he did—could not do other than give the people of Eastern New Mexico an opportunity to throw off the galling yoke under which they had long groaned. Texas claimed, as her western boundary, the Rio Grande;



the inhabitants within that boundary claimed protection of Texas. Was it any thing but a duty, then, for the chief magistrate of the latter to afford all its citizens such assistance as was in his power?

Texas claims, as I have just stated, the Rio Grande as her western boundary; yet, so isolated were Santa Fé, and such of the settled portions of New Mexico as were situated on the eastern side of that stream, that the new republic had never been able to exercise jurisdiction over a people really within her limits.\* The time had now arrived, so thought the rulers of Texas, when rule should be exercised over the length and breadth of her domain—when the citizens of her furthest borders should be brought into the common fold—and with the full belief in their readiness and willingness for the movement, the Texan Santa Fé Expedition was originated. On its arrival at the destined point, should the inhabitants really manifest a disposition to declare their full allegiance to Texas, the flag of the single-star Republic would have been raised on the Government House at Santa Fé; but if not, the Texan commissioners were merely to make such arrangements with the authorities as would best tend to the opening of a trade, and then retire. The idea, which has obtained credence to some extent in the United States, that the first Texan Santa Fé pioneers were but a company of marauders, sent to burn, slay, and destroy in a foreign and hostile country, is so absurd as not to require contradiction; the attempt to conquer a province, numbering some one hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants within its borders, was a shade too Quixotical to find favour in the eyes of the three hundred and twenty odd pioneers who left Texas encumbered with wagons, merchandise, and the implements of their different trades and callings. The expedition was unfortunate, and, as a natural consequence, the censorious world has said that it was conceived in unwise policy. In the progress of my narrative, it will be seen that its failure arose from causes purely fortuitous; in a word, that the enterprise had failed and been broken up long before those engaged in it had reached the confines of New Mexico.

\* Santa Fé is situated some fourteen miles east of the Rio Grande, on a small branch of that stream.



The expedition was to leave Austin, the capital of Texas, about the last of May or first of June. The route to be taken had not been determined upon when Major Howard was in New Orleans, but it was thought that the pioneers would follow up the San Saba road, from San Antonio to Santa Fé; a route extending in nearly a northwest, and, as was then thought, a direct line. Fearing that there might be a scarcity of water on this trace, the direction was afterwards changed.

That an enterprise, so purely commercial in its aspect, was intended for a hostile invasion of Mexico, did not, as I have already stated, enter the mind of any one at the time—at least not in Texas, where the inhabitants should be best able to judge. That a military force of some three hundred men accompanied the expedition is well known, and it is equally well known that the route across the prairies, whether by the San Saba or the Red River, would lead directly through the very heart of the Camanche and Caygüa country—inhabited by Indians who are foes alike to both Mexicans and Texans. It cannot be considered very strange, then, that in a country so infested with hostile savages as Texas is, where a man hardly dares go out to catch his horse without a rifle and a pair of pistols about him, a military force accompanied this expedition. The number of men was really not larger than that which accompanied the earlier Missouri enterprises; and large as it was, it did not prove sufficient for the purposes intended; many valuable lives being taken, and a large number of horses stolen, by the Indians we encountered on the route. These remarks I have made to counteract assertions put forth by the ignorant few, that the very fact of a military force being sent with the expedition was proof sufficient of its original hostile intentions. They would have had us, forthsooth, start off with walking-sticks and umbrellas, and be scalped to a man in order to prove our object pacific. Perhaps their knowledge of the barbarians, through whose territory we were to pass, was of a piece with that of a very worthy agent sent to Texas, some years ago, by the French government. This gentleman planned an excursion after buffalo, directly into the hunting-grounds of the Camanches, to be accompanied only by two of his friends with servants. On being told of the certainty that he would be killed, he confidently remarked that he should carry the flag of



France with him—the *Comanches* would never dare insult that!

It was while making inquiries as to the nature and objects of the Texan expedition, that I first heard of an enterprise somewhat similar, then in contemplation in the United States. A company, under the command of Colonel Pierce M. Butler, formerly governor of South Carolina, and well known as an efficient and gallant officer, was to leave a point high up on Red River for Santa Fé, having for escort a body of United States dragoons. What was the object of this enterprise, whether to counteract the Texans in their attempt to divert the New Mexican trade, or otherwise, I am unable to say. It was abandoned, at all events, for the reason that Colonel Butler could not make all his preparations in season to ensure a sufficiency of grass and water upon the prairies; but had it started, I should have made one of the party.

Thus foiled, I finally resolved upon accompanying the Texans. My intentions were, on joining this expedition, to leave it before it should reach Santa Fé, so as in no way to commit myself, and then to make the entire tour of Mexico—visiting the cities of Chihuahua, Durango, Zacatecas, San Luis Potosi, Guanajuato, and others on the road to the capital. These intentions I made known to all my friends in New-Orleans, not one of whom thought I should in any way compromise myself as an American citizen, or forfeit my right to protection, by the route I proposed pursuing. By a law of Mexico—a law of which I must confess myself at the time ignorant—a foreigner is prohibited from entering that country through the territory of Texas; but the only punishment for this offence is being ordered out of Mexico by the nearest road, a penalty which would have been very willingly submitted to by me at any moment while I was in that country.

Having made every other preparation for my tour through Texas and Mexico, I went, on the morning of the 15th of May, 1841, in company with James H. Brewer, Esq., to the office of the then Mexican vice consul at New-Orleans, and obtained from him a passport, which gave me permission to enter, as an American citizen, any place in the so-called Republic of Mexico. Thus fortified, and with intentions the most pacific towards both the countries through which I was to pass, on the 17th of May I sailed from my native



land, in the steam-ship New-York, Captain Wright, for Galveston. On bidding adieu to my friends, I anticipated an exciting and interesting tour of some four months' duration, and expected to meet with the usual dangers and participate in the usual sports to be met with on the borders and prairies—nothing more.

Our voyage from New-Orleans to Galveston was characterized by little worthy of remark. Some of the passengers were sea-sick, and all such were laughed at; some of them asserted, very positively, that if they could once set foot upon shore, they never would be seen out of sight of it, while others said they cared but little whether they ever saw land again. One circumstance I well remember: our captain told me that a piece of raw hide, placed in the mouth while suffering thirst, would impart much moisture, and consequent relief; and months afterward, when in a situation to try the experiment, I found that there was much truth in the recipe of our experienced skipper.

Early on the morning of the 19th of May we reached Galveston. This, in a commercial point of view, is the most important place in Texas; yet no vessel larger than an ordinary sloop of war can cross the bar at the highest tide. The harbour is considered far from safe; yet it is one of the best on the entire coast, from the mouth of the Rio Grande to the Sabine, and must be the point from which a large portion of the cotton and other products of Texas will always be shipped.

At Galveston I found every one talking of the proposed Santa Fé Expedition. It was looked upon as nothing more than a pleasant hunting excursion, through a large section of country, much of which was unknown to the white man. Such portions of the route as had been previously explored were known to abound with buffalo, bear, elk, antelope, and every species of game, besides fish and wild honey. The climate was also known to be dry and salubrious; in short, until a point high up on Red River should be gained, the trip promised to be one of continued interest and pleasure. But beyond that point the country was a perfect *terra incognita*, untrodden save by wild and wandering Indians, and all were eager to partake of the excitement of being among the first to explore it.

At Galveston I became acquainted with young Frank Combs, son of General Leslie Combs, of Kentucky. He



had partially made up his mind to accompany the expedition, in the hope of recovering his hearing, which had been for some time defective; on learning that I intended to start that evening for Houston, on my way to Austin, he made hurried preparations to set off in my company on board a steamer. The next morning we were landed safely at Houston.

Here all was bustle and preparation. A company of volunteers, comprising some of the most enterprising young men residing in and about Houston, had been formed, and all were busy in making arrangements for their departure for Austin, the point whence the expedition was to take the line of march for Santa Fé. Every gunsmith in the place was occupied, night and day, in repairing guns and pistols; every saddler was at work manufacturing bullet-pouches, and mending the saddles and bridles of the volunteers—all was hurry, preparation, and excitement.

To give some idea of the opinions entertained at Houston of the objects of the expedition to Santa Fé, I will here describe the general tone of conversation. Hardly a word was said of any hostile collision with the inhabitants of New Mexico; on the contrary, a chase after buffalo or a brush with the Camanches or some of the hostile tribes known to be wandering about the immense Western prairies, was the principal topic upon every tongue. Old campaigners and hunters were among the speakers, and the wild stories they told of their forays upon the borders and beyond the borders of civilization, of their hair-breadth 'scapes and encounters with bears, rattlesnakes, Camanches, buffaloes, and other inhabitants of the boundless prairies, with the thousand and one tales of the marvellous, these frontier Leather Stockings always have at their command—either ready made, or easy of construction at the time of need—all served to render those who had already made up their minds to join the party more eager than ever, and induced the lukewarm to "pack up" and follow their example.

I remained at Houston some three or four days, in which I made additional arrangements for the tour. Determined to be in no way connected with the expedition, farther than travelling with it at my own pleasure, and for such time as might suit my own interest and convenience, I had scrupulously avoided involving the Texan government in the least expense



in providing the minutest article of my outfit. My rifle—short, but heavy barrelled, and throwing a ball,\* with great strength and precision, a long distance—I had purchased of the well-known Dickson, of Louisville, Ky., and a most excellent rifle it was. My pistols, powder and lead, bowie and other knives, blankets, accoutrements for my horse, and other implements and articles necessary for a prairie tour, I had picked up here and there—some having been given me by my kind friends in New-Orleans, while others I had purchased before leaving that city. My necessities now required little save a horse, and as this was one of the most important points in an efficient “fit out,” I determined to take my time and obtain a good one.

Any one who has entered the Houston horse-market with the intention of purchasing, is well aware that it is easy enough to buy a nag, but not so easy to procure one of the right sort.

When it became known that I wished to operate a little in horse-flesh as a purchaser, all sorts of nags were “trotted out” by the different dealers and proprietors. There was the heavy American horse, whose owner had probably entered Texas by the inland or Red River route, and wishing to return by way of New-Orleans, had no farther use for him; then there were the wiry-looking Indian pony, doubtless broken down and short-winded from hard usage; the light but game Mexican; and last, the recently caught, restless, and apparently vicious *mustang*, or wild horse of the prairie: all these different samples were offered for my inspection, with the usual catalogues of their many merits, particularly their great powers of endurance. From so large an assortment I found not a little difficulty in making a selection. I looked, with an eye of fondness and craving, upon a beautiful nag, half Spanish, half wild, of fine action and most delicate points. I thought of the “show off” I could make upon a horse of this peculiar description, for he had an ambling and a proud gait, but just at this moment prudence suggested the idea of the long journey I had before me, and I purchased a heavy and powerful American horse for four times the sum with which I could have bought the spotted and sprightly Spanish pony. He was far from being “a good horse to look at,” but was “an excellent one to go,” and never was money better in-

\* Twenty-four to the pound.



vested. Bravely, and without once flagging, did he carry me my long journey through, ever ready to start off on a buffalo or other chase, and enduring to the last. "Jim the Butcher"—not a very romantic or euphonious name, but so he was called by the man of whom I purchased him—is now in the hands of the Mexicans, and sincerely do I hope they have treated him with more kindness and consideration than they did his master. Would that I had him now. Want should never overtake him until it had first conquered me.

With the purchase of my horse ended my immediate wants. I was now fully armed, mounted, and equipped for the prosecution of my journey. I cannot take leave of Houston, however, without tendering my thanks to the many kind friends I found there. To Captain Radcliff Hudson, and Lieutenants Lubbock and Ostrander, in particular, I was under many obligations. They were the officers elect of the Houston Company of Santa Fé Pioneers, and cordially invited me to mess with them as a "guest" on the expedition. Although reluctantly compelled to decline their invitation, I could still appreciate the kind motives which induced them to proffer it.

Frank Combs and myself, with one or two others also on their way to Austin, left Houston late in the afternoon. The weather was hot and sultry, and dark clouds in the southwest gave every indication of a heavy shower before nightfall. The house that had been recommended to us to stop at over night, was some twelve miles distant, inducing us to gallop rapidly along with the hope of reaching our resting-place before the coming down of the shower. As we cleared the pine woods by which Houston is environed, and struck out into the prairies, we met a party of ladies and gentlemen on horseback. They, too, were pressing their nags to the utmost, evidently to reach shelter before the heavy black clouds should commence discharging their torrents: and the loud and merry laugh of the ladies, as they gaily and swiftly passed along, shewed that they were perfectly at home on horseback, and heedless of any break-neck risks they might be running.

After a closely-contested race, of an hour's duration, with the shower, during which it was almost impossible to say which would come out a-head, we finally reached our stopping-place neck-and-neck—in racing parlance, made a "dead heat" of it. No sooner had we thrown ourselves from our



jaded animals, and hastily stripped them of their saddles, than the large and widely-scattered rain-drops, which usually precede a shower, gave place to a perfect avalanche of water. Our log-house quarters, however, were closely "chinked and daubed,"\* and we passed a dry and comfortable night.

The heavens were still overhung with clouds on the ensuing morning, although the rain had nearly subsided. After partaking of a warm breakfast, we resumed our journey across the gently undulating and fertile prairies to be found between all the many streams which water Texas. Although not yet June, the corn was nearly as high as a man's head, and gave goodly token of a most abundant harvest. The following day we crossed the Brazos at San Felipe de Austin, formerly a place of some little note, but now falling to decay. Another day, after two or three tolerably severe drenchings from the almost hourly showers that were falling, carried us through Bastrop to a noted stopping-place for travellers, within some twenty miles of Austin. The proprietor of this plantation, with his brother or son-in-law, and a few others, had settled upon it long before the revolution, and in the most troublous Indian times. Frequent and bloody were the encounters between the whites and their savage neighbours, in which the former generally came off victorious, although at times they lost some one of their number. On taking seats at the dinner table, in the house I have just mentioned, I noticed with some little surprise that one of the male members of the family sat down with his hat on. I thought him guilty of great rudeness or forgetfulness; but before we left, the mystery was explained. In one of the early encounters with the Indians he had been shot down, tomahawked, and scalped by his brutal enemies, and then left for dead. After remaining senseless for some time, the wounded man revived. He had bled much from several wounds, and was suffering extremely from pain; yet he had strength and resolution to crawl first to a spring of water, and then to his log-shanty, a distance of several miles. He suffers to this day from nervous head-ache, and, I believe, always wears his hat closely drawn down. He is the second person I have seen who has survived the barbarous process of scalping, and may be looked upon as a living witness of

\* The process of filling, with clay, the interstices between the logs of all houses in the new countries—for there all the houses are at first made of logs—is called "chinking and daubing."



what the honest Hibernian *said* was a fact, namely, "that a man is not always dead when he is killed!"

On arriving at Austin, I was introduced to Colonel William G. Cooke and Doctor R. F. Brenham,\* two of the commissioners appointed by General Lamar to treat with the inhabitants of New Mexico. They informed me that the expedition would not leave under a week at least—probably not under ten or twelve days. This delay I did not much regret, as it would give me an opportunity of visiting San Antonio, by far the most interesting place in Texas, not only from the beauty of its location and the old Spanish missions in its neighbourhood, but from its being the spot where some of the fiercest battles in the early part of the Texan Revolution were fought.

At Austin I first become acquainted with Mr. Falconer,† a young English gentleman of high literary and scientific attainments, mild and agreeable manners, and—what is rare among his countrymen when away from home—extremely sociable and companionable qualities from the first. Your English traveller, unless he is an old stager, has seen much of the world, and has learned to take the many discomforts he is sure to encounter, with composure, is prone to grumble. Nature has made him a most excellent growler, but not a traveller; and he cannot combat against her arbitrary laws. Meet him in a stage-coach, a steam-boat, or a railroad car, and as far as his dress goes—for no man knows better how to dress, while travelling, than an Englishman‡—all is right;

\* Poor Brenham! He passed safely through all the perils, hardships, and sufferings of the Santa Fé expedition, to be again taken prisoner at the sanguinary battle of Mier, fought in the early part of the year, 1843. While again on his march as a prisoner to the city of Mexico, Brenham induced his fellow-prisoners to join him in an attempt to escape. He led the attack upon the guards, had already killed two of them, and severely wounded a third, when he stumbled and fell directly upon the bayonet of his falling enemy.

+ This gentleman is the author of a pamphlet on the Oregon question, which has been quoted in terms of high praise in both houses of Parliament.—ENGLISH ED.

‡ How different with the American traveller. He must needs, on starting on a journey, array himself in his "Sunday-go-to-meeting" dress. He makes his toilet with the greatest care, alike regardless of rain, dust, or sparks from locomotives. The Englishman laughs at him, and with good show of reason; for a more absurd custom could not well be devised. I have been pleased to observe, of late, that my countrymen are gradually dropping this foolish habit.



but attempt to draw him into conversation, and he will wrap a *hauteur* about him more impenetrable than his rough overcoat. He will answer your question, it is true, but in such a way that you think he wishes to shut the gate against your asking another. His *yes* is short and quick, like the breaking of a pipe-stem; his *no* comes snappingly from him, like the growl of a hyæna when punched through the bars of his cage with a long pole. Yankee ingenuity tries, but in vain, to find out his name, his place of residence, his business—in short, *who* or *what* he is—and all this while the close observer may detect a half smile of self-satisfaction on the round and ruddy face of John Bull, as he cruelly, yet successfully, puzzles his indefatigable interlocutor.

Yet, with all his coldness and unapproachability, one cannot help admiring the English traveller. There is nothing assumed or studied in his formality—all is natural. He never asks questions—never, therefore, gives you an excuse for addressing questions to him. You think him unsocial and distant, from the coldness of his answers; he thinks you impertinent and forward, from the boldness of your questions. Both, to a certain degree, are right—and both are wrong. Could a medium rule of conduct be adopted, I am not certain that the ethics of those little sovereignties—the stage-coach, the car, and steam-boat—would not be greatly improved.

I have said that the Englishman is not “cut out” for a traveller; nor is he. With all the comforts of home about him, he will still find something to gumble at—but when he leaves it, every thing goes wrong. The roads over which he travels are bad, the landlords of the houses where he may chance to stop are unaccommodating, the servants are inattentive, the beef is overdone, the mutton is tough and unsavory. All this may be true, to a certain extent, for your traveller cannot find every thing to his liking or taste away from his own homestead; but where your American good humouredly cracks a hyperbolical joke at the expense of the landlord; where your Frenchman shrugs his shoulders, and grins and bears it; where your German resorts to his pipe or cigar for consolation, your Englishman “makes a muss” about it, and growls his dissatisfaction in looks and in words. While in the stage-coach, should your only companion by chance be an Englishman, you would be led to think that



a sentence to six months' imprisonment on the "silent system" would be neither punishment nor bore to him; but set him down to his dinner, at a common roadside tavern, and like Billy Bottom in the old play, he will "roar you like any lion." But in the social circle, or in the drawing-room, where the formalities of a regular introduction have been gone through, there our friend John is a different sort of personage—there an English gentleman is a gentleman in every sense of the word. Having now left our Englishman in comfortable quarters, where he is enjoying himself, I will return to my friend, Mr. Falconer.

He informed me that he had some little business at San Antonio, and that he should start on the ensuing day, in company with one or two friends, for that city. Here was just the opportunity I wished for. The distance from Austin to San Antonio is some eighty miles, without a single human habitation on the route. Parties of hostile Indians are continually hovering about in the vicinity of the road, ready to attack any party they may think themselves able to overcome. The bones of many unfortunate white men are now bleaching upon the prairies, between the two cities, where the travellers were waylaid and killed. At one time the wayfarer is shot at by a party of foot Indians from some cover or ambuscade; at another, he is attacked upon the open prairies by a superior number of mounted Camanches—a tribe that appear to live, move, and have their being, or, in other words, to eat, sleep, work, and fight, on horseback.

Mr. Falconer's little party consisted of himself, a Kentuckian named Mat Small, and a Canadian Frenchman named Gramont. Small had received the first rudiments of a hunter's education in Kentucky, and had finished it in Texas. An experience so extensive, and formed upon such excellent models, had rendered him somewhat noted in the country round for his science and skill as a finished borderer. Gramont, on the contrary, had been educated at Trois Rivières for the priesthood, but had never taken holy orders. He was now, instead of selling masses and hearing confessions at so much apiece, quietly pursuing the calling of a surveyor in the country of San Patricio, to which point he was on his way. This was Mr. Falconer's entire force, and with this he had made all his arrangements for the journey; but he was now reinforced by myself and Frank Combs, the

latter having made up his mind to join the party. We thus mustered five strong, all well armed and equipped for a trip that is set down as extra-hazardous.

Wishing to give my horse every chance to gain flesh and strength before starting for Santa Fé, I left him with a livery stable keeper at Austin, and hired a little, rough looking Mexican mountain pony in his stead. The latter was considerably advanced in years, disposed to take every advantage, and shirk from every thing in the shape of hard work. He moreover had a huge pair of *moustaches* on his upper lip, appendages which belong, I believe, almost exclusively to horses from his particular section and of his particular species; at all events, I have never seen them worn by other nags. He was tough, however, as wrought iron, and although one hour's riding would bring on a lazy fit, ten would not tire him; a fact of which I had most abundant evidence afterwards.



## CHAPTER II.

Leave Austin for San Antonio.—Singular Conduct of Mat Small.—Crossing the Colorado.—Venison for Supper.—Damp Lodgings.—Serenade of Wolves.—Meeting with Old Friends.—Head Springs.—Arrival of Friends from Austin.—Colonel Cooke in search of a Short Cut.—Encounter with a Texan War Party.—A Texan killed.—Amusing Adventure.—Night Entry into San Antonio.—A Mexican Dance.—Monté.—Comparative merits of Floors.—Difference between, Plank, Stone, and Earth.

THE morning of the day on which we were to start for San Antonio was unusually hot and sultry, with hardly a breath of air stirring. We had determined upon leaving Austin late in the afternoon, riding about twelve miles, and then encamping for the night on the banks of a small creek. This plan is generally adopted by persons travelling between the two places, although they are obliged, in consequence, to "camp out" two nights instead of one; but as starting early in the morning makes two long and tiresome days' marches, the former plan is deemed the most feasible and agreeable.

After dinner, while we were saddling our horses and making preparations for departure, a black cloud about the size of a buzzard was seen in the south-west. Before we were ready to mount, this cloud had spread over the whole quarter of the sky where it made its first appearance. The distant rumbling of thunder was by this time plainly heard, and the most uninitiated in the knowledge of the "weather-wise," could easily enough see that a tremendous shower was shortly to break over us. Such prudence as I was at that time in possession of, though unenlightened by experience in what most appertains to bodily comfort in the forest and prairie, suggested that if we were to send our nags to the stable, until the shower, or at least the weight of it, should be over, our evening ride would be more agreeable and the risk of catching cold far less; but instead of pursuing this course, Mat Small seemed hurrying himself to the utmost to

make a start before the rain began to fall, as if anxious to get the full benefit and luxury of the shower, if any it had. He appeared to be our leader, though self-delegated; and against his experience I deemed it prudent not to raise a murmur. Not a word did he utter—his very look was law.

To a person who, like myself, had been admonished from early infancy, both by precept and example, to keep within doors as much as possible during the heavier species of showers, the prospect now was certainly neither pleasant nor flattering. Yet there was Small, tightening his saddle-girths and arranging his wallet of stores with as much unconcern as if he did not see the threatening deluge that was hanging over us, or if he did, cared nothing for it. My companions, too, appeared to be suddenly taken with a fit of haste, and hurried through the little preliminary preparations as though life and death depended upon their "getting off" before the rain commenced falling. That some of them did it for effect I am confident.

"You'll be mighty apt to get wet," said a thorough-bred Texan who stood watching our movements in front of Bullock's Hotel.

"Wet to the skin to a certainty," I answered aloud, with the hope that I might draw Small's attention to the threatening heavens; but he never once looked at the cloud. I saw that he was determined to start; and as I should only be making a laughing-stock of myself by demurring, I assumed an indifference I was far from possessing, and *pretended* to care as little for the impending flood as any of my companions. Before my journeyings were half through I got bravely over my antipathy to thunder-showers, and took them as coolly and kindly as a young duck.

The Colorado, which we were compelled to cross immediately on leaving the city, was distant some half or three-quarters of a mile. We had scarcely mounted our animals before the rain commenced falling, and ere we had gone two hundred yards from shelter, the full weight of the shower was upon us. It may have rained harder before, may have rained harder since—these are questions I do not feel called upon to decide; but this much I will say, that if it ever have, I did not happen to be out at the time. It rained as though every window in heaven was thrown wide open, and a perfect Niagara of water was falling upon us.



By the time we reached the Colorado I was drenched to the skin—as wet as though I had been out in the forty days' deluge without great coat or umbrella. We found the river somewhat swollen by the previous rains, and the current running unusually fast; but the man Small, who appeared to have adopted the motto of "go-a-head" without taking Crockett's precaution of first ascertaining whether he was right or wrong, spurred his animal directly into the stream. Gramont and Frank Combs, well mounted on tall and spirited horses, did the same, and made the crossing without swimming; Falconer and myself, perched upon animals of smaller size and shorter limbs, were not equally successful. We were obliged to swim them across; but finally, after not a little floundering, reached the opposite bank in safety.

At a brisk pace we rode through the rich and fertile bottom of the Colorado, and soon reached the green and rolling prairies. In half an hour the rain had passed over, but the sun was still hidden by dark and heavy clouds in the west. When within two miles of the place where we were to encamp, I descried a deer some distance from our trail, quietly feeding. As there was a small clump of bushes near the animal, affording a good cover for an approach, I jumped from my horse with the determination of having a little fresh venison for supper if possible. I was fortunate enough to reach the low bushes without being seen, and after carefully peeping through them for a few moments discovered the deer, with head erect and nostrils distended, gazing steadily in the direction of my cover. Ever and anon he would give the well-known blow or whistle, showing plainly that he scented danger, although he could not see it. I raised my rifle suddenly and fired. The smoke hung lazily on the damp atmosphere, and several seconds elapsed before I could see whether I had made a successful shot. I had been told, by old hunters, never to stir from my tracks, after firing, until I had reloaded, and this advice I now followed. On approaching the spot where, but a few moments before, the deer had stood so full of life and activity, I found him lying stiff—the heavy ball from my rifle having passed directly through his body. Although the task was difficult, I succeeded in throwing the dead animal across my horse's back, and with this extra load rode to the camp. Small gave a species of half-smothered chuckling laugh as I threw what



I deemed no inconsiderable trophy of my skill to the ground. I noticed the smile, but did not, at the time, fully understand it.

In less time than it takes me to record it, the veteran hunter had cut a shoulder and some of the more delicate and eatable portions from the deer, and then, rolling the remainder and larger portion out of the way with his foot, remarked that it was but "poor doe." I told him it was no doe at all, but a young buck—I could not say much as to its fatness. He gave another half-laugh, accompanied by a slight shrug of the shoulders and a sarcastic leer out of the corners of his eyes, and then thrust a stick through the pieces of meat which he still held in his hand. Another minute passed, and the venison, with some clumsily-cut slices of ham which Mr. Falconer had providently brought with him, was cooking before a large fire which the latter gentleman had kindled. A goodly-sized pot of coffee was also quickly boiling upon the same fire, and what with the scent of the roasting meat, and the fragrance of the old Java, I soon was the possessor of an appetite a city *gourmand* might envy. Most ample justice did I do to it in the way of eating, after the meat was cooked; and a tin cup of coffee, sweetened it is true, but without milk, I then thought the most delicious draught I had ever tasted. It would be folly to deny that an appetite known only in the woods and on the prairies, lent a sauce to our plain repast which neither wine and bitters, catsup, nor any of the provocatives and seasonings usually resorted to, could have given. There was one thing, however, which was running in my mind all the while, and which I could not understand—those apparently half-contemptuous and ill-suppressed laughs of Small, and his calling young buck "poor doe!" I grew wiser before I had been a month upon the prairies, and learned the full meaning of conduct which I then thought sneering. He was laughing, in the first place, to see me pack an entire deer into camp when our utmost necessities were more than supplied by less than a quarter of the animal, and among the Texan hunters the term "poor doe" is applied, regardless of gender, to any deer that may happen to be lean. Small, no doubt, thought me lamentably ignorant of the ways of that portion of the wide world in which he moved with so much credit, as indeed I was; and what was still worse for me, I had taken his honest and



well-meant smile and accompanying chuckle, for tokens of derision and open effrontery.

By the time we had finished our meal it was near dark, and a dense fog was rising upon the little creek, the banks of which we had chosen for our camp. My clothes were wet, my blankets were wet, the grass was wet, and the air was damp—a prospect by no means pleasant to one who up to that time, had always been the possessor of shelter and a bed. To complain, however, would have given Small another opportunity to indulge in one of his quiet chuckles; so I put as good a face upon the matter as was possible, spread my wet blankets upon the still wetter grass, and after rolling myself up, resigned myself, as well as I could, to the circumstances. My friends, all of whom had some little experience in “out-door” life, were huddled around me, and made themselves exceedingly merry and facetious at my expense; but all their seeming indifference to the damp and disagreeable position we were placed in, I then thought assumed, and I did not believe that one of them thought of obtaining any sleep. For myself, I would have freely staked no inconsiderable sum that not the most skilful professor of animal magnetism who has ever lived, even old Mesmer himself, could have got a single wink of sleep out of me that night; but, while reflecting upon the impossibility of the thing, I absolutely fell into a sound slumber, as refreshing as though I had been upon the best bed in the world. Once or twice in the night I was awakened by the yelping and howling of a pack of sneaking hungry wolves, drawn close to our camp, doubtless, by the scent of the deer I had killed. Otherwise my sleep was uninterrupted.

Early the next morning, while preparing our breakfast, Major Howard and Mr. George Van Ness, who had started from San Antonio the preceding day, rode up to our camp. Van Ness I had formerly known in Vermont, but had not seen him for several years. These gentlemen were on their way to Austin, on business requiring much expedition. They proposed that we should go no farther than the St. Mark's that day, and promised that they would meet us there early the next morning, and go with us to San Antonio. Although we had intended travelling to the Guadalupe, a river some distance beyond the St. Mark's, we now altered our plan and consented to their proposal. Without



stopping to partake of our meal, to which we invited them, they gave their jaded animals the spur, and were soon lost to sight beyond a roll of the prairie. After finishing our breakfast, we saddled our animals and rode slowly towards the beautiful St. Mark's. By two o'clock we reached a deserted military station, near the head springs of that stream—the rendezvous appointed by our friends in the morning—and there encamped for the night. During the day, Small pointed to several large clouds of smoke rising at some distance ahead of us, and a little to the left of our route, remarking that they proceeded from Indian fires; but at the time we thought but little of them.

Than the country in the vicinity of the St. Mark's one more lovely and fertile can hardly be found. The stream rises at the base of a low chain of mountains, a short distance from the spot on which we were encamped. The St. Mark's is not formed by a series of small branches or creeks, but takes its rise and character from its fountain head, which is a large spring of clear, cool, and most delicious water, inexhaustible in its supply. But a few hundred yards below this spring we find a deep and swift running river, stocked with a variety of fish. The bottoms on either side are wide, well timbered, and of the greatest fertility, admirably adapted to either cotton or corn. Once clear of the bottoms, the traveller meets with gently undulating prairies, affording nutritious grass for pasturage, and a good depth of soil of fair quality. The climate is dry and salubrious, and the settler finds himself occupying lands equally fertile, yet exempt from the bilious fevers and debilitating agues so prevalent upon the Colorado, the Brazos, and other muddy and sluggish rivers of Eastern Texas. The vicinity of the Guadalupe, another swift and clear stream which we passed on the ensuing day, resembles that of the St. Mark's, and could emigrants but enjoy facilities for getting their produce to market, no finer or more healthy openings exist in America.

We passed the night at the St. Mark's with no incident worthy of relation, other than an alarm among our animals, which were hobbled and staked close by our camp. We started up and found our beasts gazing, with pricked ears, into a darkness which was to us impenetrable. Thinking they were probably frightened by a family of noisy screech



owls, perched in a neighbouring tree, or else by a more distant pack of howling wolves, we only examined their fastenings to see that all were secure, and retired again to our blankets. From circumstances that transpired afterward, I have little doubt that Indians were prowling about our camp, and that they were either seen or scented by our beasts. It is a well known fact that the horses or mules of a white man are invariably terrified at the approach of Indians, can scent them at a most astonishing distance, and, from the circumstance that they always give the alarm, are considered excellent sentinels.

At daybreak, Howard and Van Ness, now accompanied by Colonel W. G. Cooke, made their appearance. They had started from Austin at nightfall, and as the distance to the St. Mark's was some forty miles, had had a hard night's ride. The only rest they made was while we prepared a hasty breakfast; when this was over we saddled our animals and pursued our journey. The distance to San Antonio was still forty miles—not a severe day's ride for fresh and good horses—but as some of those in our company were but indifferent nags at best, and much travel worn, the march proved extremely slow and fatiguing.

We had proceeded but a short distance, before Colonel Cooke, thinking we had lost the shortest trail to San Antonio, separated from our party and struck off across the prairies to the left at a brisk canter. He was hardly out of sight before we saw, rapidly approaching us, at a distance of some mile or mile and a-half, a body of about sixty horsemen, whose character it was impossible to distinguish. Apprehensive at first that they might be Indians, we drew up in a body, with a small *mot*\* of timber close by to which we could easily retreat, and awaited their approach. It proved to be a party of Texans that had been out some four months on an expedition against the Camanches. So long had they been absent from the settlements that they really bore the strongest resemblance to Indians. Their hunting shirts had become torn and greasy, their hair long and matted, and their faces, from long exposure to the sun and only an occasional acquaintanceship with water, imbrowned nearly to the color of

\* In Western Texas a small clump of timber is called a *mot*.



mahogany. They, too, had at first mistaken us for Indians, and under this belief had approached at no inconsiderable speed; but on nearing us they discovered their mistake, and slackened their gait to one more in consonance with the feelings of their jaded animals.

Almost the first question asked by the leader of the party was, whether we had encountered Indians. On being answered in the negative, he stated that two of his comrades had started in advance, the afternoon before, for the purpose of hunting; that one of them, a man named Moore, had been killed and scalped by Indians; that his companion, Hunter, had also been wounded by the same gang, yet was enabled to make his escape, and was then safe among his men. His arm was broken by a ball, and on his name being mentioned he rode up to the advance with his wounded limb in a sling. Hunter gave us a description of the spot where he and his companion had been waylaid, and thought it singular, as we had passed directly along the trail, that we had not discovered the mutilated body of the latter. His own horse was untouched by the volley fired by the savages, and being a strong, fleet animal, brought his master off in safety. He described the Indians as being on foot, armed principally with guns and rifles, and numbering about seventy. At the conclusion of this short interview the Texans hurried off in the direction of the St. Mark's, to find and bury their unfortunate comrade, while we continued our journey towards San Antonio. That we had made a most fortunate escape the day before, by halting at the St. Mark's, was now evident enough. Had we kept directly on we should, in all probability, have fallen into an ambuscade and been cut to pieces. It was now also rendered evident that the alarm among our animals, the previous night, was occasioned by Indians, and Mat Small's remark, that the smoke we had seen in the afternoon arose from the signal fires of a party of hostile savages, received direct confirmation.

But we had other matters than the past to speculate upon. Our little party was now seven strong, all well armed if not well mounted, and we doubted not being able to give a good account of ourselves should the Indians attack us. All that was necessary was to keep a bright look-out, and not fall into an ambuscade while passing the different *mots* and ravines scattered along our trail. But where was



Colonel Cooke all this while? He was ahead, perfectly unconscious of the close proximity of Indians, and might be cut off and killed without our knowledge, or without our being able to render him the least assistance. This reflection caused us great uneasiness, and induced us to push forward with the hope of overtaking him.

Up to this time I have neglected to draw my friend Falconer's picture as he sat for it that day upon his mule. Hogarth might have done it justice; I shall only pretend to give a rough outline. Although belonging to, and reared in an excellent family, and accustomed to all the comforts of the polished life he had but recently left, he easily assimilated himself to the hardships and privations incident to a wild border life. The luxuries and good things of an English fireside he appeared entirely to have forgotten—the plain and simple substantials of a prairie alone occupied his attention. While at Austin, he had elected himself our commissary, steward, cook—in fact, our purveyor general—had provided a tea kettle and coffee pot for the general use, besides a tin cup for each man's private accommodation. With an eye to the general welfare he had also purchased a ham of goodly dimensions, besides coffee, sugar, tea, salt, and red pepper. Mrs. Bullock, the kind and attentive landlady of the best hotel at Austin, had added something like a bushel of fresh-baked biscuit to our other stock, so that we were most amply provided for. For all these nicknacks Mr. Falconer had kindly furnished transportation on his mule, a rickety, lame, self-willed, long-eared brute, of stature not exceeding eleven hands. If we can judge of a mule's obstinacy by the length of his ears, the animal in question was certainly endowed with a portion far exceeding that of any other of the species it has ever been my good or bad fortune to meet. And then, as I have before stated, she was lame of one leg, and had naturally a mincing, shuffling, hobbling gate with the other three. In addition to all this, the mule had a way of stumbling and tumbling down peculiarly her own—a habit which she indulged in to an excess absolutely inconvenient, besides being at times somewhat dangerous. To off-set all these rare qualities, she was as hardy as a grizzly bear, and as tough and untiring as a hound. The latter quality might not have been constitutional, but rather the result of the rigid system of economy she displayed in the disbursement of her strength and speed,



regardless alike of blows, spurs, cuffs, and whacks. This is a very nice point, and one upon which I dare not hazard a decision. She is now dead, poor thing, and some two months after the events I have just recorded, made a meal for many a half starved man; but even at this time I cannot help laughing at her eccentricities.

Now, upon the back of this animal I have been describing, on the morning in question, was perched my friend Falconer. He was arrayed in a costume somewhat resembling a New-England washing-day dinner, inasmuch as it was picked up here and there. I have before stated that Mr. F. had kindly offered to give transportation to our *commissariat*, and this offer he fulfilled. We now have him seated upon his mule, with a double-barrelled smooth bore upon his shoulder, while around and underneath him, tied on and hanging in festoons, was a general assortment of a little of every thing. There were a ham, a tea-kettle, a wallet of biscuit, half a dozen tin cups, a gourd, a pair of pistols, and a coffee-pot, all occupying prominent situations immediately around him. In addition, Falconer had with him a number of books and scientific instruments, and these were arranged, here and there, among the hardware and groceries. Thus arrayed and mounted, he really seemed more like a gipsy or a travelling tinker than a member of the best society in London and a distinguished barrister of that city.

We had proceeded some five miles, scattered Indian file along the trail, and were growing more and more solicitous in relation to Colonel Cooke, when the sharp report of a rifle was heard some hundred yards ahead, in a narrow skirting of timber which fringed the banks of a small stream. Van Ness, who was in advance, and had reached the edge of the timber, immediately reined up his horse and drew a pistol from his holsters. Major Howard was jogging along next to Van Ness, but at least forty yards behind him, Falconer was close to Major Howard, while myself and companions brought up the rear. The first impression with all, on hearing the report of the rifle, was that the Indians had formed an ambuscade for the purpose of cutting us off.

"Indians!" shouted Major Howard, drawing one of Colt's revolving pistols and then putting spurs to his steed and making for the thicket.

"Where?" said Mr. Falconer, drumming his spurless heels



into his mule's sides, and evincing a zeal truly laudable to be one of the first in the brush that all felt confident was about to take place.

Frank Combs, who was well mounted, came dashing by at the top of his horse's speed. This induced Falconer to redouble his kicks and exertions to force his mule along, and he had really induced the animal to make some show towards a species of Canterbury gallop, as I came up with him. Just as I had reached him, and was about to pass, down went my unfortunate friend's entire establishment, strewing the road, for some ten feet, with mule, Falconer, and sundries. Although in what a Kentuckian would call "all sorts of a hurry," I could not help stopping for a moment to survey the scene and ascertain whether my companion had injured himself. There, side and side, reposed a volume of Lord Bacon and a Kentucky ham—there too were a thermometer and a teakettle—tin cups, biscuits, fishing-tackle, a barometer, wallets, pistols, knives—scattered about in enviable confusion. I can only liken the scene to the promiscuous and miscellaneous appearance of the furniture of a house, saved from a fire and thrown helter-skelter in the street. At any other time, after finding that my companion had sustained but little personal injury, I should have laughed outright at the ludicrous tumble; as it was I could not restrain a smile as Falconer hurriedly scrambled upon his feet. By this time the secret of the rifle-shot was fully explained by the appearance of Colonel Cooke from the timber. It seems that he had become lost in endeavouring to find a shorter trail, and discharged his rifle as the only method of making his whereabouts known.

Having assisted the fallen Falconer in repacking and remounting his mule, we renewed our ride. At noon we reached the Guadalupe, without having met with any farther incident. Here we rested an hour or two under some shade trees, while our animals were feeding and fighting prairie-flies close by. Towards sun-down we arrived at the Salado, a stream which sinks in the sand and rises again some distance below the regular crossing-place between Austin and San Antonio. It was on the banks of this river that Captain Caldwell, with a small number of Texans, defeated the army of General Woll in 1842. After allowing our animals an hour's rest, we resumed our tiresome journey, and about eleven o'clock passed the old and ruined



Alamo and entered the outskirts of San Antonio. From every house some half dozen Mexican curs would jump forth and greet us with a chorus of yelps and barks, and before we had fairly entered the town the canine hue and cry was general. Those who have for the first time entered a Mexican town or city must have been struck with the unusual number of dogs, and annoyed by their incessant barking; but the stranger soon learns that they vent all their courage in barks—they seldom bite.

It was nearly midnight before I could find a resting-place for myself and horse. Late as it was, the sound of a violin drew me across the *plaza*, or principal square, and up one of the narrow streets leading to it. Poor Power, in one of his plays, used to say, that "wherever you hear a fiddle you are pretty sure to find fun;" in the present instance I found a *fandango*. As I entered the room, which was destitute of other floor than the hard earth, and lighted by two or three coarse tallow candles, a single couple were shuffling away, face to face, and keeping time to a cracked violin. Ever and anon, the woman would sing a verse in Spanish, both herself and male partner standing until its completion. Then they would shuffle away again, using a species of break-down, negro step, entirely devoid of grace and ease. Another verse, and then another shuffle, and the dance was over. The woman was as destitute of beauty as an Egyptian mummy—in fact, if dried, would have made a very good counterfeit of one of those curiosities; her partner was even more ugly. Some half-dozen slovenly, badly-dressed Mexican girls, were sitting upon benches at either end of the room, while an old woman, in one corner, was selling paper cigars and vile whiskey.\* I passed through an open door, leading into a back room, where were a small party of men and women betting at *monte*. I lost a couple of dollars "just to get the hang of the game," as the facetious Sam Slick would say, and then retired to my lodgings. Here I had no other bed than my own blankets and the hard earth floor; if anything can be harder than such a couch, I have yet to find it, and my experience has been rather extensive. A plank really seems to have a "soft side," and those who have tried both, as I have, will say that there is a species of

\* This was but a fandango of the lowest order. The reader must not suppose that there is no better society among the Mexicans of San Antonio than I found at this place.

**“give,” if I may be allowed the expression, to a stone-floor ; but a Mexican, hard-trodden, earth floor, has a dead solidity about it, which fairly makes the tired bones ache again. The experience of the few past days now came like an unpleasant panorama across my mind, and I began to reflect that I had a rough life in perspective ; but as every one said “it was nothing after getting used to it,” I resolved to “go ahead.”**



## CHAPTER III.

Description of San Antonio.—Fondness of the Women for Bathing.—Climate.—Irrigating Canals.—Fruits.—The old Spanish Missions.—Bowie and Crockett.—Church of San Antonio.—Anecdote of General Cos.—A Texan Leather Stocking.—An Adventure.—Another Night at the St. Mark's.—Fruitless Chase after Camanches.—Arrival at Camp.—Plain Supper and Good Appetite.—A Fall in the Dark.—Speculations while Falling.—Broken Bones.—Consolation under Misfortune.

By far the most pleasant, as well as interesting town, in Texas, is San Antonio, or Bexar, as it is frequently called by the inhabitants. The San Antonio River, which heads a short distance above the town, meanders through its streets, and its limpid waters, by the different turns it makes, and the irrigating canals, are brought within a convenient distance of every door. The temperature of the water is nearly the same all the year through—neither too hot nor too cold for bathing—and it is seldom that a day passes in which all the inhabitants do not enjoy the healthy and invigorating luxury of swimming. I say *all*—for men, women, and children, can be seen at any time in the river, splashing, diving, and paddling about like so many Sandwich Islanders. The women, in particular, are celebrated for their fondness for bathing, and are excellent swimmers.

The climate of San Antonio is pure, dry, and healthy; so much so, that the old but rather hyperbolical saying, "If a man want to die there he must go somewhere else," appears specially to apply to the place. During the summer months, a cool and delicious breeze is almost continually blowing, bringing health and comfort. But little rain falls; and to supply this defect, the rich and fertile bottoms of the river are intersected in almost every direction by irrigating ditches, which carry the limpid waters in every direction. Whenever the ground requires a moistening, the water from the canals is let over it at once; so that even should the summer pass without a drop of rain, the crop is invariably abundant.

Peaches and melons arrive at great perfection, and I have little doubt that many other species of fruit could be cultivated with success. The prairies, in the vicinity, afford the finest pastures for cattle and horses, to be found in the wide world, and so mild is the climate, that they thrive at all seasons.

By far the greatest curiosities in the neighbourhood of San Antonio are the *Missions*. Before I describe these immense establishments, it is necessary to observe that early after the conquest of Mexico, a main object of the Spaniards' policy was to extend the authority of the Roman Catholic Church. The conversion of the Indian, and the promulgation of Christianity were as eagerly sought by them, as the gold and silver which first lured them to the Western World; and this missionary zeal produced some of the most remarkable incidents in the history of the country. The new doctrines were first inculcated by force and cruelty, but, subsequently, in a more humane temper, by allowing the superstitions of the Indian to mingle with the rites introduced among them; and, to this day, the anomalous consequences of this policy are to be seen in the Indian ceremonies, some of which I will describe when I shall hereafter speak of our journey through the Mexican country. For the purpose, however, of affording protection to the Roman Catholic missionaries, there were established, at various times, settlements, which still bear the name of Missions. They are very numerous throughout California, and in Texas there are several. The Alamo, at San Antonio, was one of much importance, and there were others, hardly of less consideration, in the neighbourhood, called the Missions of Concepcion, of San Juan, San José, and La Espada. They were all most substantially built; the walls are of great thickness; and in their form and arrangement they were frontier fortresses. They have generally, though not always, a church at the side of a square having one entrance. Seen from without, they present the form of a blank wall surrounding a square enclosure; within is a large granary, and the wall forms the back of a series of dwellings in which the missionaries and their converts lived. There was a large appropriation of the surrounding district for the support of the mission, through which small canals were made for the purpose of irrigation. Such, at least, is the case with the missions which I have



mentioned. The Alamo is now in ruins, only two or three of the houses being inhabited. The gateway of the church was much ornamented, and still remains, though deprived of the figures which once occupied its niches. But there is enough still to interest the investigator of its former history, even if he could for a moment forget the scenes which have made it celebrated in the history of Texan independence. The exact spot where the eccentric but brave Crockett fell, surrounded by a ring of Mexicans whom he had killed, is shewn, as also the quarter where the heroic Bowie breathed his last. About two miles lower down the San Antonio River, is the Mission of Concepcion. It is a very large stone building, with a fine cupola, and, though plain, magnificent in its dimensions, and the durability of its construction. It was here that Bowie fought one of the first battles with the Mexican forces, and it has not since been inhabited. Though not so well known to fame as other conflicts, this fight was that which really committed the Texans, and compelled those who thought of terms, and the maintenance of a Mexican connection to see that the time for both had passed. The Mission of San José is about a mile and a half down the river. It consists, also, of a large square, and numerous Mexican families still make it their residence. To the left of the gateway is the granary. The church stands apart from the other buildings, in the square, but not in the centre; the west door is surrounded with most elaborate stone carving of flowers, angels, and apostles. The interior is plain. To the right is a handsome belfry tower, and above the altar a large stone cupola. Behind the church, and in connection with it, is a long range of rooms for the missionaries, opening upon a covered gallery or *portales* of nine arches. Though the Texan troops were long quartered here, the stone carvings have not been injured. The church has been repaired, and Divine service is performed in it. About half a mile farther down is the Mission of San Juan. The church forms part of the side of the square; it is a plain, simple edifice, with little ornament. The adjacent buildings are poor and out of repair. The granary stands alone in the square, and on the north-west corner are the remains of a small stone tower. The other mission, that of La Espada, is also inhabited, as well as the last. The church, however, is in ruins. Two sides of the square con-



sist of mere walls ; the other sides are composed of dwellings as in the other instances.

The church of San Antonio was built in the year 1717 ; and although it has suffered much from the ravages of time, and the different sieges which the city has undergone, is still used as a place of public worship. When San Antonio was attacked and taken by Colonels Cooke and Milam, in 1835, General Cos made the belfry of this church his head-quarters. A well-directed cannon shot from the Texans struck just above his head, inducing him to evacuate the place with his staff immediately. The hole made by the ball is still visible, and, in fact, all the houses in the principal square of the town are marked more or less by shot.

San Antonio is laid out and built with some little regularity. The houses are all of one story only, with few windows and thick walls. The town probably contained, at one time, a population of some twelve or fifteen thousand ; but the different revolutions, the many bloody battles which have been fought within its walls, and the unsettled state of the frontiers, have combined to lessen this number materially. It is still, however, a place of no inconsiderable trade, and should peace be concluded with Mexico, will regain its former standing. While I was there, a company of Mexican merchants from the other side of the Rio Grande arrived, who were allowed to trade and depart in peace ; and had the expedition to Santa Fé been given up, as was at one time anticipated, I should have joined one of these companies and entered Mexico by way of Laredo.

After spending some six or eight days very agreeably at San Antonio, I set out on my return to Austin. Two days before I left, a number of wagons, loaded with goods by the merchants of San Antonio, and destined for the Santa Fé market, left the former place ; these we overtook at the Guadalupe, and thence journeyed towards Austin in company.

While "nooning" on our third day's march from San Antonio, or in plain terms, while stopping a couple of hours in the heat of the day to rest, I set off, in company with an original, named Tom Hancock, in the hope of being able to kill a deer. This fellow, Hancock, was a perfect "character," as much so as the celebrated Leather Stocking, of



Cooper's novels. In person he was spare and gaunt, with a loose, shambling carriage of body that ill-betokened the firm set muscles and iron powers of endurance he really possessed. When standing erect, his height may have been five feet seven or eight inches; but he had a lazy, listless stoop, which shortened his stature two or three inches, and gave him the appearance of being misshapen and round shouldered. His limbs were anything but symmetrical, and seemed to hang dangling about him—this on ordinary occasions; but when the muscles were nerved, and the body straightened in the excitement of adventure, it was then that Tom appeared in his true light, a wiry, knotted embodiment of action, power, and determination.

Decidedly the best point about him was his eye, a small twinkling orb, of no definable colour, but which never allowed any object within the farthest reach of human vision to pass unnoticed. And yet, one might journey with him for days, might be in his company even for weeks, and never suppose that he was looking at or for anything. But not a footprint, not a trail, escaped the notice of that quiet rolling eye. Tom could tell you the animal that made it, the direction in which it was going, and the time that had elapsed since it was impressed upon the surface of the prairie.

In every species of backwoods, border, and prairie strategy, Hancock had his gifts, and they were such as have been vouchsafed to but few. An Indian he could circumvent and outmanœuvre at his own games, and at killing every kind of animal known in the woods or on the prairies, at fishing, or at "lining" bees, the oldest and best hunters acknowledged Tom's supremacy. He could lie closer to the ground, creep farther, expose less of his person, and get nearer a deer, bear, buffalo, or enemy's camp, than any other man, and these qualities made him invaluable not only as a mere provider of meat for a camp, but as a spy. He had been in frays innumerable with the Mexicans, as well as Indians, and invariably performed some exploit that would furnish his companions with a topic for conversation. He had been a prisoner among the Camanches, but had got away from them—in short, had made hair breadth 'scapes innumerable. Yet he never, on any occasion, boasted of his feats—never even adverted to them. Such is a rough and imperfect picture of Tom



Hancock—of one nurtured amid the solitudes of the woods and prairies—whose days had been spent in the excitements and dangers of the chase or of Indian frays, and whose nights had passed amid serenades of prairie wolves and owls. He had been hired at San Antonio by Mr. Falconer—not as his servant, for Tom would scorn being the washer of dishes or brusher of clothes for any man—but simply to accompany the Santa Fé Expedition. His obligations to Mr. F. extended this far—he was to find him if lost, and to keep him in provision should other supplies fail. Such was the singular contract.

Tom's ordinary weapon, and the one upon which he most "prided" himself, was a long, heavy, flint-lock rifle, of plain and old fashioned workmanship, for he could not be made to believe in percussion caps and other modern improvements. In the adventure I am about to describe he was armed with one of Colt's repeating rifles, which he had borrowed, his own being out of order. The spot where we had stopped to pass the heat of the day was a little prairie on the eastern side of a small branch, the borders of which were skirted by a narrow fringe of timber running nearly north and south, and ranging in width from one hundred yards to a quarter of a mile. Tom and myself skirted along the eastern side of the trees until we had travelled nearly a mile, without seeing a living thing, save two or three large prairie rabbits, which would suddenly jump up and leap off as we approached,

Thinking we might meet with deer on the opposite side of the timber, Tom noiselessly led the way through, while I followed closely upon his heels. We put up two or three turkeys near the branch, but the underbrush was so thick it was impossible to get a shot at them. When through the timber, Tom descried a couple of deer quietly feeding in the prairie. He attempted to get a shot, and laid his plans for that purpose with great judgment, and every prospect of success; but the animals appeared extremely shy, and discovered him before he was within reach of them. A little farther up the prairie, another deer was discovered; but like the others, it was timid and on the look out for danger, and ran off before my companion was within two hundred yards. "There's been Injuns round here lately, I know by the way the critters work," said Tom, in his quiet way, at the same time pointing to the



last deer we had started, which was rapidly bounding away in the distance.

The hunter now hesitated a moment, took a hurried but careful survey of the surrounding scene, and then kept on his course up the prairie, in an opposite direction from that in which our party were encamped. We had not proceeded a quarter of a mile, and were within about the same distance of the wood on our left, when an abrupt roll of the prairie brought us suddenly in sight of a large, and, to all appearance, recently deserted Indian camp, for the embers of some of the fires were still smouldering. "I knew it," said Tom, and pausing a moment, and circling the prairie with his eye, finished the sentence with "and some of 'em are close by, now." I said not a word, but watched every movement of the hunter. That danger was lurking near I was well aware, and if any one could combat it successfully I felt equally confident it was my companion. Although the movement appeared singular enough to me, Tom kept directly on nearly in the same direction, only so far varying his course as to leave the Indian camp fires on the right. We had advanced but a few steps before the footprints of men were plainly visible on the prairie grass. That they were footprints, and of five men, I could see myself; but which way they had gone, and what time had elapsed since the prints were formed, were matters to me of the most profound mystery. My first impulse was to hasten immediately to our camp, keeping on the same side of the wood until opposite, or nearly so, to our party; but I said not a word. Tom hastily threw himself upon his hands and knees, bent his head close to the ground, and attentively examined one of the footprints. As he rose to his feet he quietly remarked, "The grass ain't done risin' yet," his eye in the mean time following the fresh trail until it was lost in the wood at a point directly opposite where we then stood. That the Indians had but just passed was a fact brought home to my senses by the superior craft of my companion, and eagerly did I watch his farther movements. He ran his eye along the line of timber in either direction, lifted his rifle from the ground and hastily examined the lock and caps, and then, as if his mind was fully made up for any emergency, started a fast walk for a point of the timber still farther from our camp. I followed in silence, and I must say, in astonishment, for to my understanding there was the



utmost danger in the course he took; but with all my astonishment, I still felt the utmost confidence in Hancock, for there was a decision in his movements that gave assurance he fully understood the nature of the dilemma in which we were placed, and had adopted the wisest measures to extricate us from it.

At a long, steady stride, and without apparently turning his eyes either to the right or left, Tom kept a straight line for the timber. The wood was soon gained, and at a pace even increased, we struck directly through. I had not noticed the circumstance before, but now that we were among the trees, I saw that at this point the belt of timber was much narrower, more open, and presented fewer facilities for an ambuscade. Arrived on the eastern side, Tom did not slacken his pace until we had left the woods some three hundred yards in our rear, when placing the breech of his rifle upon the greensward, giving one long breath, and casting his eye along the thicket we had just passed, he quietly remarked, "We needn't be afraid of 'em now—five foot Injuns ain't goin' to attack us in gunshot hearin' of camp, 'specially when there ain't no place for 'em to hide." Not another word did he utter, but lifting his rifle from the ground with a slight jerk, and catching it as it fell with his right hand, he leisurely took the direction back towards our camp. This little adventure, which certainly would have been fraught with some danger had it not been for the craft of Hancock, impressed me more fully than ever with a belief in his superior skill. Another fact I ascertained from our little hunting trip; the Indian camp we had discovered was the same from which ascended the different smokes that we saw while journeying from Austin to San Antonio, and undoubtedly, was the general rendezvous of the large party who had killed Moore, and wounded Hunter, near the St. Mark's. Where the main body was, when Hancock and myself visited their premises, it is impossible to conjecture, but it was probably engaged in some marauding expedition. We were certainly fortunate in not falling in with it, and some of the warriors who composed the party were unfortunate, so far as the missing a couple of scalps may go.

We arrived in camp as our companions were saddling their animals and preparing for departure, so that we had no time for rest after the fatigue of a two hours march in



the hot sun. Our nags, however, had enjoyed a rest, if we had not, and were fresh and ready for the journey. That night we spent at the St. Mark's, and after enjoying a bath in its cool waters, I had a sound and refreshing sleep. In the early part of the ensuing afternoon, some three or four of us who were a-head descried three Camanches ascending a distant roll of the prairie on horseback. We gave chase at once; but finding, after a race of some ten minutes, that they were going at least three yards to our two over the *hog-wallow*\* prairies, we reined up and returned to the trail.

On arriving at the spring where we were to encamp that night, we found two of our young men, who had gone out early in the morning in quest of game, busily dressing a fat buck they had been lucky enough to kill. We told them the circumstance of our having given chase to a small party of Camanches, and after we described to them the route the Indians were taking when we first discovered them, our hunters at once said they were following on their trail. They also stated that in their morning hunt they had noticed such Indian "sign" † in many places, and had little doubt the Camanches we had chased, had been hanging upon their path and waiting an opportunity to cut them off. They even deemed our appearance providential in saving their lives, as they had exhausted all their ammunition, and must have been massacred if the Indians had overtaken them. ‡

\* So called from the roughness of the prairie in many parts. In some places, the ground has every appearance of having been torn up by hogs—*rooted*, I believe, is the expression—and hence the name. The Indian horses are early trained to run over these rough places with freedom.

† Any evidences seen upon the prairies of the appearance, whether recent or otherwise, of animals or men, is called "*sign*." If the marks appear recent the term is "*fresh sign*"—if otherwise, "*old sign*." The term will very likely appear often in this work, and I have therefore given this short explanation.

‡ It may be considered singular that both these young men, before the Santa Fé Expedition reached the settlements of New Mexico, met a violent death. One of them, a young man named Lockridge, shot himself on Little River—whether by accident or not was never ascertained. He was a native, I believe, of Louisiana, a lawyer by profession, of good manners, excellent education, and modest retiring deportment. He was much beloved by all who knew him,



By the time our main party reached the spring where we had come up with our hunters, it was near six o'clock in the afternoon. As I had eaten nothing since daylight, and had had no little exercise in the way of riding and walking in the interim, the reader will readily imagine that I had a tolerably sharp-set appetite. At all events, I ate venison enough to satisfy a half-famished wolf; there were no other accompaniments than red pepper and salt—but at that time I thought it the most delicious meal I had ever swallowed. Since then I have made a meal of the flesh of a poor, broken down horse with far keener relish.

The next morning, after a brisk ride of some three hours, we reached Austin again in safety having been absent nearly a fortnight. More than half of this time I had “camped out” upon the prairies, with no other bed than the ground, no other covering than the sky—blue or black, according to the state of the weather, and a Mexican blanket. I had already made considerable advancement, practically, in the science of astronomy, being able to tell the north star with much accuracy after first occupying some ten minutes in arranging the “pointers” so as to bear upon it. A friend had also promised to hunt up and make me acquainted with the “big bear” some fair night. Farther than this, I could now easily distinguish the howling of a prairie wolf from the screeching of an owl, points upon which I was sorely puzzled the first time I heard one of their concerts. But to speak seriously, I had found no bad effects from exposure so far, and was every day growing more and more reconciled to the long tour which still lay in prospect before me.

The evening after my return to Austin, however, an accident occurred which not only came near preventing me from leaving the Santa Fé, but for any other place in this lower world. The day had been hot and sultry, threatening rain, and when night came the sky was shrouded in clouds of pitchy blackness. A man's hand could have been seen as plainly had it been in Kamschatka as when held before his face, at arm's length; but notwithstanding the darkness, some four or five of us made up a little party for the purpose

and was buried with military honours near the spot where he breathed his last. The other, Doctor Bell, was an assistant surgeon, and a brother of his is said to be a captain in the United States army. The doctor was killed by Indians on the Grand Prairie, and his loss was deeply regretted by those who knew him best.



of bathing, and started for the Colorado with that intention. As the river is approached, the traveller meets with a fork in the road, one trail leading directly down a cut way excavated in the high steep bank, while the other conducts to the bluff, and then turns abruptly off along its edge. I happened to be ahead, and unfortunately took the wrong trail; yet so confident was I that I was right, that I walked directly up to and over what may emphatically be called the "jumping off place" of the Rio Colorado. It was no stumble, no pitching head-first over a steep precipice, but on the contrary, I walked directly off the giddy height—to use a common expression, went over "all standing."

It is to be presumed that a man's feelings are by no means pleasant when he suddenly finds that his feet have no footing, and that his gravity is carrying him, with a velocity absolutely uncomfortable, to say nothing of the attendant danger, from a third or fourth story window to a sidewalk, with every brick in which he is perfectly familiar; but his feelings border upon dissatisfaction and distrust when he ascertains that he is standing upon nothing, with an unknown destination before him, and has time to reflect, while descending, upon the distance he has already come, and to indulge in speculations as to the distance he has yet to go. My experience in falling from high places is limited to one or two flights of this kind, and that the world may have the benefit of it, I will return to the height from which I first started, and give a plain recital of the fall and the injuries I sustained in consequence.

The distance through which I passed I have never been able to ascertain, but it was far from inconsiderable. I was fortunate in retaining an upright position while falling, and had presence of mind to brace myself strongly, thinking that I should be better enabled thereby to meet the shock of striking the bottom, whether of earth, or stone, or water, I was at the time ignorant. My right foot reached terra firma first, the concussion shattering the ankle badly, and as I then thought, breaking every bone in my body. My back in particular was so severely injured by the shock that I was entirely bereft of the power to move. My friends hurried back as fast as the darkness of the night would permit, groped their way until they had found the road I had unfortunately missed, and were finally successful in reaching me. I was excessively faint, and called for

water. One of the party soon returned from the river with his hat full, sprinkled my face and neck, and gave me a draught. They next lifted me, with as much care as possible, to their shoulders, and carried me back to the hotel we had left but a few minutes before, in high and buoyant spirits; but it seemed as though every faculty of my body was paralyzed. Doctor Brenham, who was boarding at the same hotel, immediately called upon me and did every thing in the power of a physician or surgeon. The next morning I was enabled to ascertain the extent of my injuries, which though severe, were not so bad as at first supposed. My back was still weak, and pained me so much that I was unable to move without assistance; my ankle, in the meantime, was extremely swollen and entirely useless, and in addition gave me much pain. Yet my friends, one and all, said that I should be on my feet again in three or four weeks, as well as ever, and able to run down a buffalo bull on an open prairie. I could not feel quite as sanguine, but still thought that six weeks, or two months at furthest, would restore my bruised and shattered limb to its original strength. But even my expectations were wide of the mark, for some two months elapsed before I could even bear the least weight upon my lame foot, and it was three before I could walk without much pain.

Even to this day, and some two years have slipped away since I sustained the injury, the ankle is weak and far from being cured. Time was when I was able and willing to essay a cotillion with the sprightliest—when I could cut pigeons wings and extras, and perform the double shuffle with no inconsiderable precision and activity; but these days are over now—the “jig is up.” I still have one consolation, however, and one which I freely recommend to all who may be similarly situated; when a man breaks his leg he should always be thankful it is no worse—for instance, not his neck.



## CHAPTER IV.

**Preparations for a Start.—Speculations as to the Reception of the Expedition at Santa Fé.—A Jersey Wagon provided.—Departure from Austin.—A modern Athens.—Arrival at the Brushy.—Reviewed by the President.—Tricks of young Oxen.—Upsets.—Arrival at the San Gabrielle.—Camp stories.—Scene of a fight with the Camanches.—A night storm.—Buffalo in sight.—Stories of Buffalo.—A Buffalo Chase.—Fitzgerald.—Returns of Killed and Wounded.—Buffalo Calves in Camp.—Manner of taking them.**

THE day succeeding my unfortunate accident, I was visited, at my room, by crowds of friends, among whom was the President, General Lamar. The only topics discussed had some relation to the expedition. Preparations were going on in every quarter. The merchants were packing their goods, and mending and strengthening the heavy wagons upon which they were to be transported. Volunteers were cleaning and preparing their arms, as we were to enter an Indian and buffalo range almost immediately—in a word, all was hurry, bustle, and excitement. Every one was anticipating an exciting, a glorious frolic, the wild gossiping tales of old hunters and campaigners tending, not a little, to increase the fever of impatience to be upon the road. Not a word was said of the hardships, the dangers, the difficulties we were to encounter—the biting “northers,”\* the damp and dreary bivouac, the intolerable thirst, the gnawing hunger—these were the dark sides of the picture, and were never exhibited.

As to our reception on reaching Santa Fé, but little was said. Texas claims, as I have before stated, to the Rio Grande; and as Santa Fé is situated some fourteen miles from that stream, on the eastern or Texan side, no invasion

\* The prairies of Texas are visited, every season, by cold rains and winds from the north, called “*northers*.” The winds have full sweep directly from the mountains, and not only animals, but men, have frequently perished during their continuance.

of the territory of Mexico was thought of. It is true Texas had never been able to exercise jurisdiction over that section, because of its isolated position and the immense wilderness that separates it from the other portions of the Republic; but this was no reason why she should not, at some time, assert her claims. The universal impression in Texas was, that the inhabitants of Santa Fé were anxious to throw off a yoke, which was not only galling, but did not of right belong to them, and rally under the "lone star" banner; and events which have since transpired, and which I shall refer to hereafter, have convinced me that such was the feeling with the larger part of the population. Should any opposition be made to the peaceable entry of the Texan pioneers, it was thought it would come from the few regular troops always stationed at Santa Fé by the government of Mexico; and this force would easily have been put down if a large majority of the residents were in favour of such a course. As for having anything like a regular battle, or forcibly subduing the country should the inhabitants be found hostile, such events were neither intended nor talked of. Invading armies, when hard fighting is anticipated, seldom take merchandise with them to sell to their enemies. The merchant, who sends a "venture" to some distant and barbarous shore, anticipates, on reaching his destination, either losing all, or reaping a rich harvest of profit. The Texans looked for danger on the road across the prairies—nothing more. Safely arrived in New Mexico, their perils were all passed—they had, with the hopes and expectations offered them, no farther risks to incur. But adverse circumstances stepped in to thwart their bright dreams of commercial success—they were robbed of all, property and liberty—and after drinking thus deeply of the bitter cup of misfortune, have been held up, by those who knew neither the men nor the intentions, as a "gang of marauders," a "horde of land pirates."

But what, the reader will ask, induced so large a body of young men to start upon an expedition of this kind? What objects could they have in view? The answer is easy enough. They were actuated by that love of adventure, which is inherent in thousands of our race; they were anxious to participate in the excitements ever incidental to a prairie tour. What induced Washington Irving and his companions to make a trip to the prairies west of the Osage



hunting grounds? Why did the Honourable Charles A. Murray spend a summer with the buffaloes and the Pawnees? And why does Sir William Drummond Stewart, year after year, leave wealth and title, to say nothing of the comforts and honours in their train, and pass his summers among the Indians high up on the waters of the Missouri and its tributaries? To our party, the incentives were unusually strong and exciting. We were to pass over a portion of country entirely unknown to the white man, and might reasonably expect to meet with a larger share of adventure than usually falls to the lot of the Western travellers. We felt confident that we should meet with large bands of Indians, known to live directly on our path, who were hostile alike to Texas and Mexico, and with whom we should have an occasional "skrimmage." We should see the American Indian, too, in his primitive and unhunted retreat. Thus fraught with adventure, the tour promised to be one of unusual interest.

While lying confined to my bed at Austin, I received from Mr. Roberts, then acting Secretary of State, a letter written at the request of General Lamar, inviting me to join the expedition as a "guest." I was to be subject to no control, civil or military; I was free to remain with the expedition so long as it suited my convenience, and to leave it when I pleased—in short, I had no connection, other than that of a stranger who happened to be travelling the same road, with the men whom I accompanied, or with the objects in which they were engaged. In the same letter I was kindly invited to mess with the commissioners, or civil branch of the expedition, an invitation I gladly accepted. This letter, with my passport, and other papers of importance, as defining the relation in which I stood to the expedition, I placed in a secure parcel, and always kept about my person. I was determined, by no act of mine, to forfeit my claim to American protection any farther than by accompanying the expedition across wild and unknown prairies; and considering these papers the best proofs I could have to sustain me, should difficulties, which I certainly did not anticipate, arise on my reaching New Mexico, I was careful in preserving them. The obligations I considered myself under to the officers of the expedition, were these: to obey all general orders for the well-being and safety of the men, and if we were attacked by Indians on the march, or met with any



opposition from them, to take an active part with my friends. Here my obligations ceased. I had started with the intention of making the entire tour of Mexico, and could not compromise myself so far as to take any part in the events which might occur on reaching the settlements of New Mexico, whether these events should be pacific or hostile. But to continue my narrative of the movements of the expedition.

The 18th of June arrived, and with it the time for the departure of the pioneers. It was now three days since I had met with my unfortunate accident, and I was still unable to move without assistance. A few of my friends endeavoured to dissuade me from going; but I was blessed, or cursed, as the case may be, with strongly-developed organs of self-will, obstinacy, and "go-aheadity," and made up my mind to go even if I had to be carried. "I will go it if I lose a leg," is a common, yet not very classical remark among a certain class of Western men, when they have fully made up their minds to do a thing. I determined upon starting for New Mexico although I had already as good as lost a leg, at least for all present purposes, and it is now too late to regret that I did so.

Among the Texan Commissioners was José Antonio Navarro, Esq.,\* who, like myself was unable to walk. For our accommodation, General Lamar provided a neat Jersey wagon, drawn by two mules, and covered so as to protect us from the sun and rain during the long marches.

As I have stated above, it was on the 18th of June that the last detachment of the expedition left Austin. This was at least one month later than it should have been, on account of both water and grass; but unavoidable delays had arisen in getting every thing in readiness, and even as it was, General McLeod, the commander of the military portion, was obliged to march unprovided with many necessaries. The main body of the expedition had been lying encamped for some time on the Brushy, a small stream about twenty miles from Austin. As far as this point General Lamar

\* Mr. Navarro is the only member of the Santa Fé pioneers still retained a prisoner. He is a Mexican by birth, was once a senator in the Congress of that Republic, is a man of no inconsiderable abilities and influence, and has been punished with unusual severity. I found him a kind hearted, gentlemanly man, and regret that he was not liberated with the rest of the prisoners.



accompanied the last party. I was assisted into the wagon on leaving, but still bade adieu to civilization, its comforts and enjoyments, in good spirits.

At Austin we left the last token of a settlement—beyond, all was in a state of wild, uncultivated nature. Singular as it may appear, the then capital of Texas was the extreme frontier town, and what may appear still more strange, daring bands of hostile Indians have frequently been known to enter the principal streets, run off with horses tied to the very doorposts of their owners, and in some instances have even murdered the inhabitants within a few hundred yards of the government house.

From Austin to the Brushy, the road—for here there is an old military road—runs over rolling and beautiful prairies, occasionally relieved by the slight skirting of timber which fringes the margins of the small streams, or by a small grove of timber so regularly planted by nature, that it would almost seem the hand of man had assisted in its production.

To the left of the road, at the distance of some mile and a half or two miles, is a high and delightful situation, which some visionary speculator, years since, endeavoured to convert into a stirring town.

In the first place, he purchased a beautiful site for a city—lacking only all the essentials to support a large population. Highly coloured plans were got out, and on paper, at least, a more flourishing place never existed. There were colleges and squares, city halls and penitentiaries, public walks and public houses—and looking at the engravings, so well were they executed, a man could almost imagine he heard the carriages rattling over the pavements, and the busy hum which denotes the large and thriving city.

The name by which it was known on the plans—it cannot be found on the map of Texas—was *Athens*; and so firmly did the visionary who planned it believe in his speculation, that he built a house and made some other and expensive improvements on the premises. While engaged in digging a well, assisted by some two or three negroes, he was attacked by a roaming party of Camanches and driven off, narrowly escaping with his life. The person who gave me this information said that the man never returned, and that everything remained just as he had left it. Thus fell a modern Athens.

We made a short stop, during the heat of the day, at a



cool grove. Near it was a fine spring of water, and under the shade of the over-arching boughs a plain dinner was prepared. Every man appeared to be his own cook, President Lamar as well as the rest. I also observed that his excellency unsaddled and staked his own horse on a small plot of grass near by. There was a specimen of Republican simplicity—the chief magistrate of a nation cooking his own dinner and grooming his own horse! In all my intercourse with General Lamar, I ever found him a courteous and honourable gentleman, possessing a brilliant intellect, which has been highly cultivated; and if Texas ever had a warm and untiring friend, it was and is Mirabeau B. Lamar.

It was late in the afternoon when we reached camp, a beautiful and romantic situation on the Brushy, near several large springs of cool and most delicious water. The camp was all animation on our arrival, as it was a token that the expedition was soon to be on the march. Many of the volunteers had been stationed at this place three or four weeks, and had become impatient of the delay; now that it was rendered certain that they were soon to be on the move to Santa Fé, all was joy, activity, and life.

General Lamar was accompanied by the Honorable Mr. Chalmers, Secretary of the Treasury, and several other gentlemen, who all “roughed it” upon the ground at night with the volunteers—a single blanket forming each man’s bed. The next morning the different companies were reviewed, a neat and appropriate address was delivered by the President, after which himself and party returned to Austin.

Two days were now passed on the Brushy, in reloading the wagons, and making the necessary arrangements for the long journey we had before us. Here I would state, that never since the discovery of America had such a journey been undertaken. Years before the first wagon started from St. Louis to Santa Fé, every inch of the country was well known, and the route that was to be taken clearly defined; all that was known in our case was, that Austin was in such a latitude and longitude and Santa Fé in another—of the principal part of the country between the two points not a man among us knew any thing. That deep rivers were to be crossed, that ravines were to be encountered, that salt and dry prairies were to be met—in short, that innumerable obstacles would be found in our path, were things that ever



one expected: of the nature and extent of these obstacles all were alike ignorant. Yet in the face of difficulties which seemed almost insurmountable, the expedition started, and after toil almost incredible they were overcome—twenty-four wagons were taken in safety over nearly a thousand miles that never had been trodden before except by the savage. At starting, it was known that the direct course was almost northwest; but as it was feared there might be a scarcity of water by taking a straight line, it was deemed prudent to follow the course of the Brazos, cut through the celebrated Cross Timbers before reaching Red River, and then follow up that stream, the course of which was supposed to be nearly east and west. By this route we made nearly a right angle, and the journey was much longer, and probably more difficult.

On the morning of June 21st, the expedition finally took up the line of march from the fertile valley and cool springs of the Brushy. Two companies, numbering some eighty men, were detailed to go forward as an advanced guard; then came the wagons, in single file, and the beef cattle that were to furnish us with meat. One company was also detailed for fatigue duty—driving the cattle and cutting away the banks of creeks, or removing any obstacles that might obstruct the passage of the wagons. This was the most irksome and laborious duty of all, and was performed by the companies in turn. The rear-guard brought up the long procession, and consisted of three companies, there being six in all. These companies were commanded by Captains Caldwell, Sutton, Houghton, Hudson, Strain, and Lewis, the latter commanding the artillery company, which had one brass six-pounder. The number of volunteers doing duty were two hundred and seventy. In addition, there were about fifty persons attached to the expedition in some way, being General McLeod and his staff, the commissioners, merchants, tourists, and servants. None of these, except the first named, did military or guard duty.

The long train of wagons moving heavily forward, with the different companies of volunteers, all well mounted and well armed, and riding in double file, presented an imposing as well as an animating spectacle, causing every heart to beat high with the anticipation of exciting incidents on the boundless prairies. On the first day many of the young oxen, "critters" that had never been yoked before,



performed divers unseemly antics, diverting enough to themselves in all probability, but by no means pleasing to the drivers. The consequence was that a number of the wagons were upset, occasioning delays which made it near night before we reached our camping ground on the San Gabriel. The road this day was over beautiful rolling prairies, the land, rich, and susceptible of cultivation.

The San Gabriel is a picturesque stream running into the Brazos. A few miles above our camp, on its banks, a settlement had formerly been made by one or two families; but they had been attacked by Indians, and those who were not killed, driven off. The stream abounds with trout, perch, and catfish, as do nearly all the watercourses in this section of Texas. Some of our party who were first in, amused themselves by fishing, and shooting alligators, the latter being too plentiful for any useful purposes.

On the arrival of the beef cattle, one of them was selected, shot, and dressed with the greatest expedition, and then followed the cooking and eating of both dinner and supper. We had made no stop during the day, which necessarily brought both meals together, and good appetites to do them justice.

Our fare was simple enough—roasted or broiled beef, cooked on sticks or ramrods before the fire, with salt, coffee, and sugar. No breadstuffs were provided, unless a small quantity of rice can be dignified with that title; but the appetites we contracted during our long ride across the high, dry, and bracing prairies, served us instead of bread and dessert, and a more hearty meal it has seldom been my lot to partake of.

Our meal over, knots of the volunteers would congregate, here and there, around the camp fires, telling stories of the marvellous, and spinning long yarns about border forays, buffalo hunts, and brushes with the Indians of the prairies. The stories of buffalo hunting, in particular, were eagerly listened to, as it was known that in ten days we should be in the best range for these animals in Texas.

An hour or two would be whiled away in this manner, and then preparations would be made for *retiring* to sleep—a very simple process upon a campaign. A person has only to pick out a soft place upon the ground, roll himself up in his blanket, and take immediate possession of his bedroom; and though people who have never lived “out of doors”



may picture anything but comfort with such lodgings sounder, sweeter, and more refreshing sleep never visited the downiest couch, than can be found upon the earth on one of our western prairies. Should any of my readers ever undertake a tour of the kind, and find any difficulty in getting to sleep, I can recommend a plan to bring about that desirable object which has never been known to fail in a single instance : *just count the stars*.

As the days were now extremely warm, early morning starts were recommended and adopted. Accordingly, at daybreak on the 22d of June, we were awakened by the cheering notes of the *reveille*. We had a small but tolerably well organised band with us, including some two or three clarionets, a horn and bugle, besides fifes and drums. To the latter instruments was assigned the task of waking us in the morning ; and at first there was something so inspiriting in the lively notes of the *reveille* breaking the deep stillness of the early dawn, that with me farther sleep was uncared for. I was heartily tired of it before the campaign was half over.

Notwithstanding our early start, we made but twelve miles this day, encamping on Opossum Creek, as there was no water beyond within several miles. During this day we passed the scene of an Indian fight which took place a year or two previous, and in which Major Howard, having drawn a party of Camanches into an ambuscade, gave them a severe drubbing. His men were fortunate enough to discover the Indians before these had seen their white enemies, giving the latter every advantage. Knowing, full well, that he never could come up with the Camanches in a chase, or provoke them into an open fight on the prairies, for in number the two parties were nearly equal,\* Major H. resorted to a stratagem. Secreting his men in a thick grove of timber, he started off alone, well mounted, in the direction of the enemy. The moment the Indians saw him they considered his scalp as certain as though it was already hanging at their saddle-skirts, and with frightful yells gave chase. The gallant officer trusted to his steed, at a time when a stumble would have been inevitable destruction to both. The Texans, in their covert, could plainly hear the

\* The Camanches, even on the prairies, never attack the whites unless they greatly outnumber them.



distant whoops of the savages, and hugged still closer the trees behind which they were sheltered. With almost lightning speed the pursued and pursuers scoured across the prairie, the former leading the savages directly within range of his own men. When at a point opposite the Texans, and within a few yards' distance, a well-directed volley tumbled seven of the Camanches dead from their horses. So sudden and unexpected was this reception, that the Indians turned their horses and made a precipitate retreat. One only remained behind, whose heroic conduct deserves a passing remark. Among the dead was his brother, and in endeavouring to save the body from the hands of the Texans, the savage lost his own life. He dismounted, and absolutely succeeded in packing his lifeless brother upon his horse amid a shower of bullets; but while mounting, a well-directed rifle ball pierced him to the heart, and the brothers came together to the ground. Not one of Major Howard's men was injured.

In the night we passed at Opossum Creek, we were visited by a tremendous storm of thunder, lightning, and wind, although but little rain fell. Our tent had been pitched, and, as we thought, securely; but the first heavy gust of wind carried it completely from its fastenings, and the rest of the night, to quote the expression of one of our men, we "took plain without kiver."

Our next day's travel carried us across rolling prairies, not a tree being in sight in any direction. Here and there, in the distance, small gangs of buffaloes could be seen scampering off, the scouting parties, it would seem, of the immense herds we were soon to encounter. Several of the huge animals were run down and killed during the day by some of our hunters, and that night, for the first time, I made a meal of buffalo meat—one of those killed being a fat cow, and her flesh of fine texture and delicious sweetness. Two buffaloes had also been killed on the previous day; but they were old and poor, and nothing but their tongues was brought in.

Large numbers of petrifications, some of them uncommonly perfect, were found in the vicinity of our camp on Deer Creek. Although the distance must be some three hundred miles from the sea coast, we still found fossil specimens of oysters and other shell-fish in abundance, and in good preservation. I remember one oyster in particular, the



shell of which, on being forced open, displayed the edible part of that delicate luxury in form and colour so natural that I could not help thinking of pepper, salt, vinegar, and a fork, at once.

The stories this night in camp were all in relation to buffalo, the abundance of "sign" in the shape of tracks, and places where the grass had been eaten close, plainly denoting that we were in the vicinity of a large herd. The old campaigners, and there were many among us, told stories of the immense number they had seen at a time, while the harum-scarum youngsters of the camp would listen eagerly to their tales, manifesting, at the same time, a restless impatience to be among the huge monarchs of the prairies.

"How many buffalo did you ever see at one time?" asked a young man, whose greatest achievement had been the bringing down a fat buck, addressing one of the oldest backwoodsmen in camp.

"Can't say exactly—probably between two and three million!" replied the old one, with a cool, matter-of-fact indifference, as much as to say that he was keeping as near the truth as possible.

I was an attentive listener to this conversation, and could not but remark the singular expression on the countenance of the young man. At first, he partially closed his left eye, and opening his right to its utmost width, gazed intently in the face of the old hunter with a look half comic, half incredulous. Then, as if thinking he might not have fully understood the answer to his question, he turned his head to one side, somewhat after the manner of a hog in an oak grove listening for the fall of an acorn, and curving his left hand into the form of a half-moon and placing it behind his ear, so as to be certain of hearing every word, he again addressed his older and more experienced friend with "Perhaps I mistook your answer—*what* number of buffalo did you say you had seen at one time?"

"Between two and three million?" repeated the old one, with a countenance as immoveable as though it had been made of cast iron.

"Y-e-s," drawled the youngster, with that peculiar tone and expression which signify that one neither believes nor disbelieves a story, or in other words, intimating that while he did not wish the old campaigner to think he altogether



discredited the number, he was at the same time anxious to avoid being considered over credulous by entirely swallowing a story which might possibly be intended as a quiz. As for myself, I did not believe a word the old hunter said, but rather thought he was indulging an appetite for which all of his class are notorious, that of "stretching" their stories far beyond the line between the probable and incredible. Since then, however—in fact the very next day—I "saw sights" which induced me to alter my mind, and to give the aged borderer more credit for keeping within the bounds of probability than I was at first willing to accord him. I do not say that I have seen "between two and three million" at the same time; but I have stood upon a high roll of the prairie, with neither tree nor bush to obstruct the vision in any direction, and seen these animals grazing upon the plain and darkening it at every point. There are perhaps larger herds of buffalo at present in northern Texas than anywhere else on the western prairies, their most formidable enemies, the Indians, not ranging so low down in large parties, on account of the whites; but I was told that every year their numbers were gradually decreasing, and their range, owing to the approach of white settlers from the east and south, becoming more and more circumscribed. It would seem almost impossible, especially to one who has seen them, numerous as the sands of the seashore, on their immense natural pastures, that the race can ever become extinct; but when he reflects upon the rapid strides civilization is making westward upon the domain of the buffalo, he is brought to feel that the noble race will soon be known only as a thing of the past.

The whites have two ways of hunting these animals. One is to creep up within a short distance, and shoot them with a rifle carrying a heavy ball, or with a musket—a mode of hunting seldom resorted to except by those who are in want of meat. The other way is to sally out after them on horseback, armed with heavy-holster pistols, run alongside, while under full speed, and shoot from the saddle. Of all hunting in the world this is probably the most exciting, at the same time involving the sportsman in no little danger. The horse that has been trained to it soon gets as fond of the sport as his master, will run directly up within three or four yards of the immense animal, and is always ready to sheer off and get out of the way in case the buffalo shews a



disposition to fight. When the hunter wants meat, he rides in among the animals, and singles out a fat cow or young bull, which he marks for his own—if he be merely hunting for the sport, or for “grandeur” as it is called in the West, he attacks the oldest and largest bull he can find, and continues to blaze away at him with his pistols until he brings him down. He may possibly secure the tongue of the animal—the carcass is soon sought and preyed upon by the legion of buzzards which are ever on the scent.

Early on the morning of June 24th we left our encampment on Deep Creek, intending to reach Little River before night. We had travelled but a few miles before the cheering cry of “Buffalo! buffalo!” was heard along the line. Directly ahead, on the right and left of our road, innumerable small black objects could be seen, more resembling stumps than aught else. As we slowly approached them, the objects became more distinct, gave signs of life, and appeared to be slowly moving about on the interminable prairie. When within half-a-mile, it was evident, even to those who had only seen badly-executed woodcuts of the animal in “picture books,” that they were buffalo, spread out over the immense space, and in countless numbers.

Notwithstanding orders had been given the volunteers not to break their double-file ranks, nothing could restrain the youngsters from leaving the command and sharing in the exciting chase. The merchants, and others not attached to the military, were at perfect liberty to go when and where it might please them, as a matter of course. We were soon surrounded by buffalo, and every two minutes a Texan malcontent would leave the ranks at full gallop, and dash off after some huge animal, which chance, or a more clumsy gait, had left behind his fellows. Never have I beheld a scene so full of excitement. Such of the command as did not join in the hunt continued steadily along, myself and Mr. Navarro, in our Jersey carry-all, keeping in line with them, while all around us was hurry-scurry and confusion. We had not advanced a mile, after reaching the outposts of the immense herd, before we were in their midst, seeing nothing in any direction save the immense animals speeding along at a heavy, lumbering gallop, the larger ones more resembling loads of hay in motion than anything else I can liken them to. In the distance, far as the eye could reach, they were seen quietly feeding upon



the short prairie grass, and apparently unconscious of the wild riot and danger so near at hand.

Unable to mount a horse, I could not join the exciting chase; yet I could plainly see and enjoy the animated scene. At times, I could discern one of our men, apparently hemmed in on all sides by the frightened and infuriated animals, and running the greatest risk of being run over and trampled to the earth. Anon, the smoke of a pistol would rise, followed quickly by the report, and then succeeded a general and confused scattering. Perchance a bull—for the “green-horns” generally select the largest of the herd as affording a better mark—would be seen to totter, his tail lashing the air in furious circles, and then to tumble headlong to the earth; at another time, one of the animals, wounded and rendered furious by pain, would rush blindly and madly at his pursuer. The largest number of horses were entirely unused to the sport, and “fought shy” of the unsightly animals; others, again, had been regularly trained, and would eagerly carry their riders up to the buffalo, and allow them to “bang and blaze” away, pistol after pistol, without starting, or even moving a muscle. Such is a faint description of the stirring scenes I saw around me on that day’s travel.

Among the merchants was a wild, frolicking Irishman, named Fitzgerald, one of the best fellows that ever the sun shone upon. Fitz, as he was universally called, was descended from one of the best families in Ireland, nearly every member of which has been distinguished as an officer in the British service. His mother was a daughter of the celebrated Archibald Hamilton Rowan, who acted so conspicuous a part in the Irish rebellion of ’98, and one of his uncles, a major-general in the English army, has recently returned to England, from Bombay, where he was Governor. As several of Fitzgerald’s brothers held commissions in the British service, his family thought it expedient to make a clergyman of him, although nature had intended him for anything but that. To carry out their plans successfully, they sent him, when only some eight years of age, to a school near Boulogne, in France. There he learned the usual amount of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and, according to his own statements, an extra amount of mischievous practices generally. At the age of eighteen, he returned to Ireland, and on his peremptorily refusing to take holy orders,



his father ordered him to Jamaica, to fill a lucrative station he had procured for him in the customs. He set off for that island, but on getting as far as London, he saw the walls covered with handbills, calling upon volunteers for General Evans's Legion, then about to embark for Spain to the assistance of Isabella. Here was just the thing that suited Fitzgerald's wild temperament and ardent impulses, and to enlist, leaving the customs of Jamaica to regulate themselves, was his first movement. Arrived in Spain, he was promoted, step by step, for his gallant conduct, and finally, for skilfully and successfully leading a forlorn hope, received a captain's commission, and was also created a knight of the Order of St. Ferdinand. The return of the Legion to England left Fitz without employment; but hearing that he could obtain a commission in the Persian army, he pushed for that country to join the service. Finding, on reaching his new and singular destination, that there was little fighting, and less pay, he returned to England. He next visited the Cape of Good Hope, either with, or in search of, his father, and from that point went to Van Dieman's Land, and the parts adjacent. Thence he returned to England, taking Brazil in his route. A life of inactivity he could not endure; so hearing that there was not only fun, but fighting, in Texas, he embarked for that Republic by way of New-Orleans. We next hear of him selling dry goods at San Antonio de Bexar. This business, however, did not prevent him from joining the different expeditions against Mexicans and Indians that were continually fitted out at that place, and in this way he became enamoured of a prairie life—a feeling which induced him to join the Santa Fé Expedition. Educated in France, he spoke the French language, and his three years' sojourn in Spain had given him a smattering of Spanish—enough, at all events, to carry on an ordinary conversation.

Always willing, ready, and among the first to enter into any madcap, daring, or break-neck scrape, as a matter of course Fitz led off the chase after the buffalo. He was mounted on a game and untiring Mexican pony, loaded down with saddle-bags, water-gourd, blankets, and the miscellaneous equipage which constitutes the fit-out of a campaigner; but all this did not deter him from starting off at once. Away he went in neck-or-nothing style, riding up to the first buffalo he met, and banging away with his pistols



as fast as he could load and fire. In all his wanderings he had never met with buffalo before, and so exciting was the dangerous sport of riding among them, that he could not command himself. In the mad chase he lost first his hat, then his blanket, and finally his saddle-bags and water-gourd; but these were mere trifles when such game was in sight, and as Fitz never stopped to pick them up, they are probably now lying on the prairie in the exact places where he dropped them.

My friend Falconer, too, was seized with a fit of excitement. His horse, however, unlike that of Fitzgerald, was a sedate, quiet, slow-and-easy kind of an animal, holding a gallop or canter in such especial abhorrence, that neither whip nor spur could induce him to indulge in either. Still Falconer must needs have a trot after the buffalo, as he could not chase them in a gallop; and it was droll enough to see a gentleman, who had started upon the expedition in search of strange weeds, stones, and the picturesque, now jogging along after buffalo, with a glass raised to his right eye. As he was armed only with a double-barrelled gun, loaded, probably, with bird shot, he did not essay the killing of any of the huge monsters by which he was at times surrounded.

The number of buffalo killed during the day, in our immediate vicinity, was twenty-eight; the number of prisoners taken, in the shape of young calves, some ten or twelve. As to getting the number of wounded, that would have been impossible.

In the afternoon we reached Little River, where we encamped for the night, and where we had a feast of choice buffalo meat, tongue, and also the marrow bones of that animal; some of the calves also were killed, and furnished us with delicious veal. The simple things followed our men into camp without the least trouble. It was only necessary to blind their eyes with the hand for a moment, push their noses to the ground, and hold them in that position until their dams were out of sight. On raising their heads they would stare about, and the first object that caught their gaze, whether man or horse, they would follow like dogs. Thus ended our first day among the immense buffalo herds of the Western Prairies.



## CHAPTER V.

**Idle Hours in Camp.—Night Alarms.—Death of Lockridge.—Improvident Waste of Provisions.—Game in our Vicinity.—Bird's Battle-ground.—A Visit from Mustangs.—The "White Steed of the Prairies."—Plenty of Buffalo.—Out of Water.—A Troublesome Visitor.—Rattlesnakes and Tarantulas.—Death of Flint.—Crossing the Bosque.—The Antelope, or Mountain Goat.—Another Branch of the Bosque.—A Stampede!—Falconer's Horse at his Eccentricities.—Laughable Antics.**

BEFORE the main body of the expedition left Austin, in May, it was thought by those most familiar with the subject, that the journey to Santa Fé would not occupy more than six weeks, or two months at the very farthest, and a supply of beef on the hoof was purchased, amply sufficient for that length of time. On arriving at Little River, our commissary stated that it would be imprudent to go farther without sending back for more beeves, as in the long delay on the Brushy, the volunteers had consumed a large portion of those originally furnished. Had the expedition started at the time originally proposed, there would have been no necessity for a fresh supply; but inasmuch as it had been delayed three weeks, the wants of the men, admitting that the journey would occupy two months, would require some thirty head of cattle more. The regular ration to each person was three pounds of beef a day, a quantity amply sufficient for an ordinary man, even when he has no bread-stuffs, or vegetables, as was our case. In addition to the beef, coffee enough to give each man two pints a day, with the needful sugar, was served out. Instead of bread-stuffs, for which transportation could not be provided, a quantity of tobacco was served to each man.

The sending back to the settlements for an additional number of beeves occasioned a delay of five days, the time being passed in fishing and hunting by some, lounging and sleeping by others, and heavily enough by all; for the desire to be on the move was a serious drawback upon the enjoy-

ments even of those most fond of buffalo hunting. The place where we encamped, abounded with a small insect called, I believe, the seed tick, which penetrates under the skin in great numbers, raises small sores or pimples, and causes a burning and continual itching. I was completely covered, or rather filled, with these annoying visitors, and lost many an hour's sleep in consequence.

We had two alarms the second night we passed on Little River. The first was about ten o'clock, and was caused by the sharp report of a rifle directly in the centre of the camp. A circumstance so unusual started every man to his feet, and the alarm was far from inconsiderable until it was ascertained that the young man Lockridge, of whom I have spoken elsewhere, had shot himself. Some two hours after, the camp was a second time thrown into excitement by the startling "Who goes there?" of one of the guard, followed by the heavy report of a musket. The hands of every man were instantly upon his gun, and every preparation was made to resist an attack from Indians, for in the hurry and alarm we could think of nothing else; but on enquiring into the affair, it was ascertained that an honest Dutchman, a servant of Colonel Cooke, was returning late into camp, with a horse he had found after a long search, and that not answering the sentinel promptly, he had been fired upon. Fortunately he was untouched, although badly frightened. This second alarm satisfactorily explained, we again returned to our blankets, and the rest of the night was passed in quiet and sleep.

While encamped upon Little River, and I may say during the whole of the time we were in the buffalo and game country, there was a most improvident waste of beef, the regular rations being served out to each man. Those who could obtain choice portions of the buffalo and deer, which were now killed in immense numbers, of course threw away the coarse and tougher parts of the beef given them. These, however, soon found customers; for clouds of buzzards were immediately hovering over and lighting within the lines, playing the part of most excellent scavengers. Could we but have anticipated the horrible sufferings we were then bringing upon our heads, or rather stomachs, by this prodigality; had we thought the time was near at hand when the poorest morsels we were throwing away so lavishly would be absolutely necessary to sustain



life, a more provident course would have been adopted. Some of the old campaigners spoke of this waste at the time, remarking that the buzzards were fattening upon meat of which we should all feel the want before we got to our journey's end; but by far the greater portion of us were inexperienced, and went on the principle of taking special good care of ourselves to-day and letting to-morrow look out for itself. We gained experience and wisdom afterward, but we bought it at an enormous price.

The place where we encamped on Little River was the site of an old picket fort, garrisoned, some years previous, by a detachment of Texan soldiers, who were stationed there to keep a look-out for Indians. The location is one of exceeding loveliness, healthy, and combining every advantage for a flourishing settlement. A growth of heavy timber, some two miles in width, covers the fertile bottom, while the rich prairies afford the best of grazing for the immense herds of buffalo and deer always to be found in the vicinity. Bears and Mexican hogs, the latter a ferocious animal, are found in great numbers in the bottoms, fish of different varieties are caught in the stream, and many of the trees are filled with delicious wild honey.

While encamped at this place, General McLeod was attacked with fever, and was carried in a wagon to Bryant's Station, some twenty miles to our right, near the Brazos. Major Howard took the command of the expedition during his illness. On the evening of the 29th of June the order was given for an early march next morning—an order received with joy by all. The next morning, therefore, saw us again on our road, crossing prairies on which buffalo could be seen in almost every direction. In the afternoon we passed the scene of Bird's celebrated battle with the Indians. With thirty-three Texans only, he fought some two hundred and fifty Indians several hours, killing large numbers of them. Bird, himself, was killed, towards the close of the battle, which was a drawn one, both parties retiring after sustaining great loss.

At sundown, a drove of *mustangs*, or wild horses of the prairie, paid us a flying visit. They were first seen ascending a hill at the distance of half a mile, and as they were coming towards us were taken for Indians. When seen on a distant hill, standing with their raised heads towards a person, and forming a line, as is their custom, it is almost impossible to



take them for anything but mounted men. Having satisfied their curiosity, they wheeled, with almost the regularity of a cavalry company, and galloped off, their long thick manes waving in the air, and their tails nearly sweeping the ground. They are beautiful animals, always in excellent condition, and although smaller than our American horses, are still very compact, and will bear much fatigue.

Many were the stories told that night in camp, by some of the older hunters, of a large white horse, that had often been seen in the vicinity of the Cross Timbers, and near Red River. That many of these stories, like a majority of those told by gossiping campaigners, were either apocryphal, or marvellously garnished, I have little doubt; but that such a horse has been seen, and that he possesses wonderful speed, and great powers of endurance, there is no reason to disbelieve. As the camp stories ran, he has never been known to gallop or trot, but paces faster than any horse that has been sent out after him can run; and so game and untiring is the "*White Steed of the Prairies*," for he is well known to trappers and hunters by that name, that he has tired down no less than three race-nags, sent expressly to catch him, with a Mexican rider, well trained to the business of taking wild horses. The latter had nothing but a *lasso* or *lariat* with him—a long rope, made either of hemp or horse hair, but generally the latter. One end of this rope is made fast to the pommel of the saddle, while the other is formed into a noose: the Mexican carries it coiled up in the right hand, and throws it with astonishing dexterity and precision, casting it directly over the head, feet, or even tail of the animal he may be pursuing.

The Mexican who was sent out to take the wild steed, although he mounted a fresh horse as the one he was riding became tired, was never near enough the noble animal to throw a slip-noose over his head, or even to drive him into a regular gallop. Some of the hunters go so far as to say that the white steed has been known to pace his mile in less than two minutes, and that he could keep up this rate of speed until he had tired down everything in pursuit. Large sums had been offered for his capture, and the attempt had been frequently made; but he still roamed his native prairies in freedom, solitary and alone.\* The fact of

\* Since my return, I have been informed by a Texan gentleman, that a horse in many respects answering the description of the



his being always found with no other horse in company was accounted for, by an old hunter, on the ground that he was too proud to be seen with those of his class, being an animal far superior in form and action to any of his brothers. This I put down as a rank embellishment, although it is a fact that the more beautiful and highly formed mustangs are frequently seen alone.

On the 1st of July we reached Cow Creek, killing large numbers of buffalo during the day. The 2nd we halted to repair some of the wagons which had been upset and injured. The gullies and creeks we were compelled to cross were many of them impassable until much time had been spent in cutting and digging away the steep and lofty banks, with all the cutting and digging, however, hardly a day passed in which we escaped an upset; and then the expressions made use of, by the drivers and fatigue men, sounded so much like swearing of the most forcible kind that there was no mistaking it. It appeared to be the only study of some of our teamsters to invent the most blasphemous oaths; and the cool, slow, and decided manner in which these imprecations were uttered shewed that they wished all within hearing to have the full benefit of their studies. I asked one of them, just as he had finished a long and most horrid oath, which I would not dare to put on paper, why he uttered such profanities. His answer was, they saved much whipping, and that his oxen drew much better than with the common kind of swearing. Be this as it may, I believe that if the unfortunate animals had possessed the powers of understanding, they would have run away in the middle of one of the long list of blasphemies. I have heard swearing in many quarters, but for originality, deliberate utterance, and deep wickedness, I have never heard that of some of the drivers on the Santa Fé Expedition equalled.

Our route from Cow Creek led us over high and dry prairies, and after travelling some twenty miles—a long distance for wagons—we were finally obliged to encamp without water. The day had been insupportably hot,

“White Steed of the Prairies” has been caught, after a hard chase, between the head waters of the Trinity and Brazos. He lived but a short time, however, the excessive fatigue of the race causing his death.



without a cloud, or hardly a breath of air stirring, and all the water in our canteens was consumed before noon. As a consequence, we suffered extremely that night; and had there been a glass of water up at auction, I should certainly have bid high for it. Visions of sherry cobbler, soda, and other cooling drinks haunted me the whole night, and when I awoke it was to the painful reality that there was no reality in my dreams. Since that time I have gone ten miles for a cup of water.

An early start the next morning which was the Fourth of July, enabled us to reach a cool and delicious spring early in the afternoon, and here we slaked our intolerable thirst. A few seconds after, we had forgotten our sufferings. A man may endure the most torturing thirst for thirty-six or forty-eight hours—thinking of water, and nothing but water the while—but the moment he has reached it, and swallowed a sufficiency, all thoughts of past suffering are at once banished.

We had no opportunity of keeping the birthday of American Independence as many of us could have wished; but the heavens got up a private celebration, in the shape of a thunder-storm, and seldom have I heard such continued, heavy, and rattling peals. It always seemed to me that in the early part of summer the thunder was louder, the lightning more vivid, and the storms generally were more severe on the prairies than any where else. They are not, perhaps, attended with as much rain, but the accompaniments are altogether on a grander and more magnificent scale.

We had a troublesome and unwelcome visitor in camp on the night of the Fourth of July. The storm had induced the mess to which I was attached to pitch a tent. The wet grass without, probably, drove a prairie rattlesnake to more comfortable quarters within our canvass, the first intimation we had of the vicinity of his snakeship being his crawling over one of us in an attempt to effect a lodgment under some of the blankets. A more disagreeable companionship cannot well be imagined, even if one has his choice from among all living, moving, creeping, flying, running, swimming, and crawling things; and to assert that any of us felt perfectly easy and at home with such a neighbour among us would be saying what is not true. For myself, fearing to move lest I should molest the reptile, I rolled myself, head and all, under my blanket, and lay perfectly quiet until daylight.



Where the intruder went no one could tell, and we had the very great satisfaction of seeing no more of him.

Very frequently, on the great prairies, a man wakes up in the morning and finds that he has had a rattlesnake for a sleeping partner; but there is one excellent trait in the character of these reptiles—they never bite unless disturbed, and will get out of the way as soon as possible, except in the month of August, when they are said to be blind, and will snap at any and every thing they may hear about them. The ordinary prairie rattlesnake is of small size, seldom being seen over three feet in length; but those living in the holes of the prairie dogs, mention of which I shall make hereafter, grow to an immense magnitude. The former, I believe, are considered not only the most vicious, but the most poisonous.

In addition to the rattlesnake, the *tarantula* is frequently met with in the Texan prairies, is also often found under the blanket of the campaigner, and is said to be as poisonous as the former. They are large, black, venomous-looking insects, with bodies about the size of a dove's egg, although their long and strong legs make them appear much larger. When attacked with a stick, they will rear up on their hind legs and attempt to bite, and are extremely ferocious in every respect. The least scratch from their long fangs throws a person into convulsions, and will produce death unless immediate remedies can be procured. The ballet of *Lo Tarantule*, in which Elssler gained so much applause, is a beautiful creation, although founded upon an idle superstition of the Italians. The bite of the real tarantula drives a person to anything but dancing, subjecting him rather to fits and strong nervous excitement. The opinion prevails, among the ignorant and superstitious of many countries, that music will cure the individual who has been bitten by one of these venomous insects. What effect it might have in soothing the nervous system I am unable to say; but were I bitten by a tarantula I should certainly prefer hartshorn, taken inwardly and outwardly, for the purpose of procuring a safe and speedy cure.

It is deemed an easy matter to keep the rattlesnake from sharing your bed while sleeping upon the prairies. It is said that they will never cross a hair *lariat*, so that by circumscribing the ground you occupy, with one of these instruments, you enjoy an exemption from their more



sociable visits ; but this is no guard against the poisonous tarantula. Few persons, however, are bitten by either, not an instance occurring on the route, although we saw great numbers of each.

On awaking the next morning, after the adventure with the rattlesnake, we found that there had been another visitor in camp, and one from whose insatiate fangs there is no escape. Death had carried off a poor fellow named Flint. He had eaten freely of unripe grapes or berries during the previous day, which brought on a cholic that no medicine could reach. He was buried at an early hour, and a volley was fired over his grave, after which the march was resumed.

We had already, and with no inconsiderable difficulty, crossed one branch of the Bosque, and on the evening of the 5th arrived at another fork of the same stream, where we encamped for the night. It abounds with excellent trout and soft-shell turtle. This day, for the first time, we saw the antelope, or mountain goat, an animal somewhat resembling both the deer and the goat, but with flesh preferable to that of either. It runs with great speed, and has a stride like a horse. How fast the animal can run when in possession of four legs is a question I am at a loss to answer, but one with a fore leg broken by a rifle ball made out to escape from one of our best horses after a long chase. On the table-lands at the foot of the Rocky Mountains they are met with in great numbers, and many are seen on the Upper Brazos and Colorado. Although a shy, they are still a very inquisitive animal, and are frequently lured within gunshot by simply hanging a red handkerchief upon a ramrod or stick, and moving it aloft. The hunter keeps his body out of sight as much as possible, when the antelope, seeing nothing but the handkerchief, approaches, with head erect and by slow degrees, until within rifle-shot, and then pays the penalty of its curiosity with its life.

The early part of the 6th of July was spent in cutting a road through the thick belt of wood which skirts either side of the main branch of the Bosque, and in partially digging away the high, steep banks of the stream. The labour of crossing the river was incredible. In descending the abrupt banks which led to the channel, it was necessary, not only to lock the wheels, but to hold back the wagons with ropes to prevent them from pitching down, "head first" as it were ;



the greatest difficulty, however, was in ascending on the other side. The ascent was nearly perpendicular and some forty feet high, with no better footing than a deep sand. Some twenty yoke of oxen would in the first place be hitched to a wagon; then ropes would be attached wherever there was a place to make them fast, manned by about fifty or sixty of the fatigue party; finally, all the drivers would be called in requisition, and when all was ready for a start such a jumping, whipping, cracking, yelling, pulling, cursing and swearing, would arise as to set all description at defiance. Bedlam itself, with five hundred Indians as an accompaniment, seemed let loose in a body. I will not pretend to say that had Bonaparte met with the Bosque while crossing the Alps he would have been compelled to return; but he would have found a serious detention at all events. Yet difficult as was the crossing, everything was safely over before the middle of the afternoon, and we still made a march of a few miles to a spring a short distance from the River Brazos. At this camp we were favoured for the first time with the magnificent but much-dreaded sight of a *stampede* among our horses.

As there was no wood near our camping-ground, some half a dozen men pushed on to a small piece of timber in search of it. One of them had a wild, half-broken, Mexican horse, naturally vicious and with difficulty mastered. His rider found a small dry tree, cut it down with a hatchet, and very imprudently made it fast to his horse's tail by means of a rope. The animal took it unkindly from the first, and dragged his strange load with evident symptoms of fright; but when within a few hundred yards of camp he commenced pitching, and finally set off at a gallop with the cause of all his uneasiness and fear still fast to his tail. His course was directly for the camp, and as he sped along the prairie it was soon evident that several of our horses were stricken with a panic at his approach. At first they would prick up their ears, snort, and trot majestically about in circles; then they would dash off at the top of their speed, and no human power could arrest their mad career.

"A *stampede*!" shouted some of the old campaigners, jumping from the ground and running towards their frightened animals; "a *stampede*! look out for your horses, or you'll never see them again!" was heard on every side. Fortunately for us, the more intractable horses had been



not only staked, but hobbled before the panic 'became general, and were secured with little difficulty, else we might have lost half of them irretrievably.

It is singular, the effect that sudden fright has, not only upon horses, but oxen, on the prairies. The latter will, perhaps, run longer and farther than the former, and although not as difficult to "head," because they cannot run so fast, their onward course it is impossible to stay. Oxen, so I was informed, have been known to run forty miles without once stopping to look back; and when they did finally hold up, it was simply because exhausted nature would allow them to go no farther. Not one in fifty of them had seen the least cause for fear, but each ran simply because his neighbour did. Frequent instances have occurred where some worthless but skittish horse has caused the loss of hundreds of valuable animals. In the instance I have above alluded to, we did not lose one, but on a subsequent occasion, no less than eighty-seven were irrecoverably lost by one *stampede*.

Nothing can exceed the grandeur of the scene when a large *cavallada*, or drove of horses, takes a "scare." Old weather-beaten, time-worn, and broken-down steeds—horses that have nearly given out from hard work and old age—will at once be transformed into wild and prancing colts. When first seized with that indescribable terror which induces them to fly, they seem to have been suddenly endowed with all the attributes of their original wild nature. With heads erect, tails and manes streaming in air, eyes lit up and darting beams of fright, old and jaded hacks will be seen prancing and careering about with all the buoyancy of action which characterizes the antics of young colts; then some one of the drove, more frightened than the rest, will dash off in a straight line, the rest scampering after him, and apparently gaining fresh fears at every jump. The throng will then sweep along the plain with a noise which may be likened to something between a tornado and an earthquake, and as well might feeble man attempt to arrest either of the latter.

Were the earth rending and cleaving beneath their feet, horses, when under the terrifying influence of a *stampede*, could not bound away with greater velocity or more majestic beauty of movement. I have seen many an interesting race, but never anything half so exciting as the



flight of a drove of frightened horses. The spectator, who may possibly have a nag among them which he has been unable to get into a canter by dint of spur and whip, sees his property fairly flying away at a pace that a thorough bred racer might envy. Better "time," to all appearance he has never seen made, and were it not that he himself is as much astounded as the horses, there might be very pretty betting upon the race.

On one occasion, when a closely hobbled horse was rushing madly along the prairie under the influence of fright, his owner coolly remarked, "I wish I could make that critter go as fast on my own account without hobbles, as he can on his own with them—I'd gamble on him sure." And so it is. No simile can give the reader a fair conception of the grandeur of the spectacle, and the most graphic arrangement of words must fall far short in describing the startling and imposing effect of a regular *stampede*!

While upon this subject, I should not, perhaps, neglect to notice one of the little private *stampedes* my friend Falconer's horse was in the habit of occasionally getting up, principally on his own individual account and to gratify his own peculiar tastes and desires, entirely regardless, all the while, of his master's convenience as well as of the public safety.

He was a short, thick-set, scrubby, wiry nag, tough as a pine knot, and self-willed as a pig. He was moreover exceedingly lazy, as well as prone to have his own way, and take his own jog—preferring a walk or gentle trot to a canter; and so deep rooted were his prejudices in favour of the former methods of getting over the ground, that neither whip nor spur could drive him from them. He possessed a commendable faculty of taking most especial good care of himself, which he manifested by being always found where water was nearest and the grass best, and on the whole might be termed, in the language of those who consider themselves judges of horse flesh, a "tolerable chunk of a pony" for a long journey.

He had one bad quality, however, which was continually putting his master to serious inconvenience, and on more than one occasion came near resulting seriously to all. One day we stopped to "noon" close by a spring of water, and had simply taken the bridles from our horses to give

them a chance to graze, when he improved the occasion to shew off one of his eccentricities. Falconer had a way, as I have before stated of packing all his scientific, cooking, and other instruments upon his horse, and on the occasion to which I have alluded, some one of them chanced to chafe or gall the pony, inducing him to give a kick up with his hinder limbs. The rattling of the pots and pans started him off immediately, and the faster he ran the more they rattled. We immediately secured our horses by catching up the *lariats*, and then watched the fanciful antics of the animal that had raised all the commotion.

He would run about ten jumps and then stop and kick up about as many times; then he would shake himself violently, and then start off again on a gallop. Every now and then a culinary or scientific instrument would be detached from its fastenings, when the infuriated pony would manage to give it a kick before it struck the ground and send it aloft again. The quadrant took the direction towards the sun without taking it; the saucepan was kicked into a stew; the thermometer was up to 100— inches above the ground, and fell to—worth nothing. To sum it all up, what with rearing, pitching, kicking, and galloping about, the pony was soon rid of saddle and all other encumbrances, and then went quietly to feeding, apparently well satisfied with all the trouble he had given his owner. •

The whole affair was ludicrous in the extreme, defying description. The rattling of the tin, earthen, and other ware, as the pony snorted, kicked, and pranced about, made a noise resembling that produced at a *charivari*. His antics were of the most unseemly nature, too—and the cool philosophy of Mr. Falconer, as he quietly followed in the wake of the vicious animal, picking up the fragments scattered along, completed a picture which would have made the fortune of Cruikshank had he been on the spot to take it down. Some time after this adventure the Indians stole the horse, but they made a bad bargain of it.



## CHAPTER VI.

Singular Natural Road.—Valley of the Brazos.—Crossing the Brazos. Prairie on Fire.—A Recently Deserted Village.—Trick of a Wag.—“Seeing the Elephant.”—The “Cross Timbers.”—Destruction of our Tents.—The Crossing of Nolan’s River.—Deserted Indian Village.—Our Last Day in the “Cross Timbers.”—A Gloomy Night.

On the evening of the 6th of July, the day after the *stampede* mentioned in the preceding chapter, we encamped in a rich and beautiful valley through which Cedral Creek meandered. Our descent into this valley was down the sides of a steep hill, and by a road so perfect that it seems almost impossible nature had any hand in making it. From the top we had a fine view of the romantic valley far below us, which was studded here and there with clumps of trees, while in the distance a dim outline of mountains and the wooded bottoms of the Brazos relieved the eye.

At first it was thought impossible to get the wagons down the steep declivity, but the spies soon found that there was a regular road winding down the sides, and by means of this we descended with ease and safety. For some two miles there was every appearance of a regular excavation on the upper, and of an embankment thrown up on the lower, side of the hill; and if this road, upon which there was little vegetation, be really the work of nature, it may be put down as one of her strangest doings. Had it not been accidentally discovered we should not have made the descent without great labour, if at all.

Some of the wagons needing repairs, and our present encampment affording every facility for that purpose, it was resolved to remain here until General McLeod should arrive, and with him the additional cattle for our subsistence. On the afternoon of the 8th, we were all overjoyed to see the expected party winding their way down the singular natural road which we had travelled two days previously. General McLeod now resumed the command,

and ordered us to make every preparation for an early start on the following morning. Our course, up to this time, had been north, varying a little to the east, perhaps, as the broken and hilly country intervened. The object of Mr. Howland, our guide, was to cross the Brazos at the nearest practicable point, and follow up between the waters of that stream and the Trinity.

After travelling some sixteen miles on the 9th, to gain certainly not more than half that distance, we were fortunate in reaching a small spring of water. Our progress had been considerably impeded and made devious and tiresome by deep gullies and runs. The ensuing night we encamped upon the banks of a small creek of fresh water, emptying into the Brazos. This latter stream was now but a few miles to our right, its rich and fertile bottoms, flanked by a heavy growth of timber, being plainly visible.

Our route, on the 11th of July, was along a chain of rough hills which separate the valley of the Brazos from the prairies. During the day several wagons were in some way broken and injured, and it was only after a tedious and toilsome march that we were enabled to reach a cool and delicious spring of water, and find good pasturage for our jaded horses and oxen. Here we found grass in great abundance, and as many of the wagons were again in need of repairs, we remained until the 14th.

The location upon which we were encamped being in the edge of the timber, with rich prairie directly in front of us, was one of the finest we had yet met on our route. The valley of the Brazos at this place abounded with every species of timber known in Texas; grapes, plums, and other fruit were found in profusion; honey could be obtained in almost every hollow tree; trout and other fish were plentiful in the small creeks in the neighbourhood, and the woods and prairies about us not only afforded excellent grazing for our cattle and horses, but teemed with every species of game—elk, deer, bears, wild turkeys, and at the proper season, buffalo and mustang. No fresh Indian "sign" was discovered, but the year previous a large body of Cherokees or Wacoes had evidently made the neighbourhood their home, old tent poles being found still standing near our camping ground, as well as corn fields which had been cultivated the year before.



As I have said, we were encamped by a cool and delicious spring of never failing water. Some half a mile distant, in an eastern direction, the Brazos meandered along, whose salt and brackish waters, although unpalatable for man, were swallowed with avidity by both horses and cattle. Indeed, so fond were the latter of this water that they drank incredible quantities of it, and could hardly be induced to leave the stream the first time they were taken to it. At certain periods of the year the prairie Indians visit the salt streams of Texas, considering the waters highly beneficial to their stock.

We crossed the stream on the 14th, after much difficulty from the quicksands and high banks. The wagons all over, we stopped for an hour or two under the shade of some oaks that skirted the border of the valley, and here, for the first time, I saw the magnificent spectacle of a prairie on fire. It was purely accidental, and caused us little damage; but had the wind been in a different direction it would have swept the whole face of the country for miles and miles in advance. The dry grass flashed up like powder, and the fire spread over the prairie with alarming speed. At first an attempt was made to extinguish it, by means of switches made of green boughs and bushes; but those who exerted themselves in this way returned from the task with singed whiskers, eyebrows, and hair, and without having effected anything.

We pursued our journey in the afternoon, and reached a mud-hole—for it could not be called any thing else—where we encamped. All night the long and bright line of fire, which was sweeping across the prairie to our left, was plainly seen, and the next morning it was climbing the narrow chain of low hills which divided the prairie from the bottoms of the Brazos.

With a single exception of one day and night, we had suffered little from want of water up to the 15th of July. After a tortuous and tedious march, over a dry prairie ridge, we were finally obliged to encamp without water. Of course we suffered most intolerably ourselves, after having travelled all day in a hot sun; but the cattle and horses felt it even more seriously. At night the guard found great difficulty in herding and keeping them together, so anxious were they to start off in search of water, and the next morning the horses had a wild expression about the eyes, com-



bined with an uneasiness and fretfulness, which forcibly told their suffering.

Our start in the morning was early, and eagerly did we press forward with the hope of finding water. No breakfast had been cooked, as eating only tended to increase a thirst which was already distressing. Late in the afternoon, and when we had almost despaired of finding water, one of the spies returned with the joyful intelligence that a large and cool spring had been discovered but a little way off our course. The line of march was now instantly broken; for those who had good horses dashed madly forward, while the drivers bestowed heavy blows, and imprecations if possible more horrible than ever, upon their tired cattle, to press them onward. In small straggling parties we reached the goal of our hopes. A ledge of rocks, from which cool and limpid water was gushing in all directions, formed the head of the spring, and a few yards below, the different branches fell into a common basin some twenty yards in width, and filled to the depth of eight or ten feet with the transparent element. A purling stream was here formed, which carried the surplus water of the beautiful reservoir to mingle with the brackish current of the Brazos—a base and most unnatural union.

Our thirst was slaked at the very fountain-head—the basin was converted into an immense bathing-tub, where all hands enjoyed the invigorating luxury of a bath. My ankle was still much swollen, and so sore that I was unable to use it in the least; but I made out to hobble to the basin on one foot, and gained great strength by lying at the edge and allowing one of the cool streams from above to fall upon the lame part. The next morning, after enjoying another bath, we left this delicious spring with regret, and pursued our journey with no prospect of water before us. We were fortunate enough, however, to reach a small branch of running water at nightfall, upon which we encamped.

Our camp was hardly formed before Captain Caldwell, or “Old Paint,”\* as he was generally called, returned with

\* Captain Caldwell received the *soubriquet* of “Old Paint,” from the fact of his naturally dark hair, whiskers, and beard being covered with large white spots. In Texas, and some of our Southern States, a horse or other animal which is spotted is called a “paint.” Captain C. was an old backwoodsman, had been engaged in conflicts almost innumerable with the Mexicans and Indians, and was what



the spy company, and reported that he had fallen in with an Indian camp which apparently had been deserted but a few hours. The duties of the spy company, I might here add, were to keep one day in advance of the main body, for the purpose of picking out the best road for the wagons, finding water, and keeping a look-out for Indians. Captain C. brought in a number of roasting ears, and stated that he found many unripe melons and pumpkins among the corn. While on Little River, a report had been sent to General McLeod that a large party of Cherokees, Caddoes, and individuals of other tribes, all hostile to Texas, had planted themselves in a large and fertile bend of the Brazos above the Camanche Peak, and that they had extensive and well-cultivated fields, besides a large number of horses and mules. At first it was determined to go somewhat out of our way and attack this party in their stronghold, for it was said that they were well fortified; but upon after thought it was feared the detention would be too great, and the adventure was given up. It was now evident enough that we were in the vicinity of these hostiles, and at night strict orders were given the guard to be on the alert to prevent a surprise, or our horses and oxen from being *stampeded* and driven off.

The next day we made but five or six miles on our journey, and encamped near several mineral springs, the waters of which were strongly impregnated with iron and sulphur. The skull of a white woman, but recently killed, was found in the vicinity, and large and fresh Indian trails were discovered running in the direction of the Brazos. We also passed through a recently-deserted Indian camp upon the march, the bark wigwams still standing, and many of the implements generally seen in an Indian village remaining precisely as the frightened inhabitants had left them.

Some ingenious wag had left our camp early in the morning, alone, and happened to be the first to discover this

is termed in Texas an excellent "rough fighter" and hunter. He was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence of Texas, and many of his daring achievements are often recounted in that country. He was released, with the other Texan prisoners, and returned to his family at Gonzales; but on the invasion of Texas in 1842, by General Woll, he recruited a company and defeated that officer at the Salado. The following winter he died, much regretted by all who knew him.



village. The fellow played off a fine trick upon some of us in the manner following: the interiors of some of the wigwams were lined with smooth bark, and choosing one of the larger domiciles, he covered the bark with rough but tolerably well-drawn figures of men, horses, and buffalo. He must have been a rapid sketcher, as the entire ceiling, if I may so call it, was in this way decorated. Underneath a group of figures stood out, in bold relief and in good Roman characters, the crack-jaw name of some Indian brave, leading us to suppose, at once, that this was the artist who had executed the work above. Not suspecting, for a moment, that any such hoax had been played, and never imagining that any of our men had gone ahead and alone, we could not but come to the conclusion that some erratic white genius had domesticated himself among the Indians, or that one of the wild sons of the woods and the prairies had cultivated, in some way, a taste for the fine arts. The author of the hoax, however, thinking the joke too good to be lost, finally divulged the secret.

Our next day's march was along the high ridge of prairies which divides the waters of what was thought to be Noland's river from those of the Brazos. The prospect on both sides was romantic in a high degree. To the east, for miles, the prairie gently sloped, hardly presenting a bush to relieve the eye. In the distance, the green skirting of woods, which fringed either border of a large stream, softened down the view. Occasionally a deer would jump suddenly from his noon-day rest, and scamper off across the prairie, but other than this no game was seen. The few deer we saw were exceedingly wild, from the fact of there being so many Indians in the vicinity; while the buffalo had evidently all been driven to the south.

To the west of the ridge, the immediate vicinity was even more desolate, but the fertile bottoms of the Brazos, with their luxuriant growth of timber, were still visible, and the Camanche Peak, rising high above the other hills, gave grandeur and sublimity to a scene which would otherwise have been far from monotonous. This peak is celebrated as a looking-out point for the Camanches, commanding, as it does, a complete view of the country around as far as the eye can reach—and hence its name.

Late in the afternoon we reached a small spring of water, where we encamped, and the grass being excellent in the



vicinity, we remained nearly all the next day to rest the jaded cattle and repair the rickety wagons. Many of the latter were half worn out when we started, and the rough road over which we had travelled was far from improving them. An afternoon's march brought us to a noble spring in a grove of post oaks—a grove which turned out to be one of the outskirts of the celebrated Cross Timbers.

Up to the 21st of July, one month from the time when we left the Brushy, our course had been nearly north, the country we traversed principally fertile and rolling prairies, destitute of timber except the bottoms of the different streams we had crossed. Our road, in the mean time, although we had considered it very bad, was a perfect macadamised turnpike in comparison with what we were shortly to meet. There is a cant expression, "*I've seen the elephant*," in very common use in Texas, although I had never heard it until we entered the Cross Timbers, or rather the first evening after we had encamped in that noted strip of forest land. I had already seen "sights" of almost every kind, animals of almost every species, reptiles until I was more than satisfied with the number and variety, and felt ready and willing to believe almost anything I might hear as to what I was yet to see; but I knew very well that we were not in an elephant range, and when I first heard one of our men say that he had seen the animal in question, I was utterly at a loss to fathom his meaning. I knew that the phrase had some conventional signification, but farther I was ignorant. A youngster, however, was "caught" by the expression, and quite a laugh was raised around a camp fire at his expense.

A small party of us were half sitting, half reclining, around some blazing fagots, telling stories of the past and speculating upon our prospects for the future, when an old member of the spy company entered our circle and quietly took a seat upon the ground. After a long breath, and a preparatory clearing of his throat, the veteran hunter exclaimed, "Well, I've seen the elephant."

"The *what*?" said a youngster close by, partially turning round so as to get a view of the speaker's face, and then giving him a look which was made up in equal parts of incredulity and inquiry.

"I've seen the elephant," coolly replied the old campaigner.

"But not a real, sure-enough elephant, have you?"



queried the younger speaker," with that look and tone which indicate the existence of a doubt and the wish to have it promptly and plainly removed.

This was too much ; for all within hearing, many of whom understood and could fully appreciate the joke, burst out in an inordinate fit of laughter as they saw how easily the young man had walked into a trap, which although not set for that purpose, had fairly caught him ; and I, too, joined in the merry outbreak, yet in all frankness I must say that I did not fully understand what I was laughing at. The meaning of the expression I will explain. When a man is disappointed in any thing he undertakes, when he has seen enough, when he gets sick and tired of any job he may have set himself about, he has "*seen the elephant*." We had been buffeting about during the day, cutting away trees, crossing deep ravines and gullies, and turning and twisting some fifteen or twenty miles to gain five—we had finally to encamp by a mud-hole of miserable water, and the spies had been unable to find any beyond—this combination of ills induced the old hunter to remark, "I've seen the elephant," and upon the same principle I will here state that I had by this time obtained something more than a glimpse of the animal myself.

We were now fairly within the limits of the Cross Timbers, a singular strip of wooded country, a description of which may not prove uninteresting.\*

The immense western prairies are bordered, for hundreds of miles on their eastern side, by a narrow belt of forest land well known to hunters and trappers under the above name. The course of this range is nearly north and south, with a width ranging from thirty to fifty miles. The growth of timber is principally small, gnarled, post oaks and black jacks, and in many places the traveller will find an almost impenetrable undergrowth of brier and other thorny bushes. Here and there he will also find a small valley where the timber is large and the land rich and fertile, and occasionally a small prairie intervenes ; but the general face

\* My own opinion is, that we entered the Timbers near the southern extremity. What distance this singular forest extends north I am unable to say, but I believe it terminates not far from the Canadian or Arkansas. It probably reaches no farther south than a point near the junction of Noland's River with the Brazos.



of the country is broken and hilly, and the soil thin. On the eastern side of the Cross Timbers the country is varied by small prairies and clumps of woodland, while on the western all is a perfect ocean of prairie. The belt, therefore, for whatever purpose it may have been fashioned by the Great Creator of all things, appears to be an immense natural hedge dividing the woodlands of the settled portions of the United States from the open prairies which have ever been the home and hunting ground of the red man. To use another figure, it may be looked upon as the western side of the frame of an immense landscape painting, the United States forming the subject. The Gulf of Mexico may be considered the frame on the southern side, the Atlantic on the east, while the great lakes which divide the picture from Canada must serve for the northern side.

In that portion through which we passed, and we spent nearly a fortnight in the Cross Timbers, we found the face of the country broken, and full of deep and almost impassable gullies. These, in the rainy season, carry off the waters from the hills to the larger streams outside the woods, but in July we found them all dry. Had we been able to travel directly west we should have materially shortened our journey; but the country was such that we were compelled to pursue a diagonal course, subjecting men, cattle, and horses, to great privation and suffering, to say nothing of the vexations of our slow and toilsome march.

Bear and deer are found in the Cross Timbers, and the vicinity, and small gangs of buffalo take shelter in them when scattered and driven from the prairies by Indians. In many of the trees swarms of wild bees are found, affording delicious honey—a great luxury to those who are engaged in a border life, for it is well known that the absence of bread-stuffs increases the appetite for sweets of every description. Often, while living upon nothing but poor beef, and not half enough of that, did fallacious pictures of confectionary stores and cake shops pass before my dreaming fancies—the shadows of pies, puffs, and patties, of comfits, candies, and creams, were there, but the substance was far away.

For two or three days we journeyed through the middle of the belt, every attempt to find a passage out proving futile. On one or two occasions, distant fires were seen upon the hills at night, but we were unable to get a sight of the Indians who were encamped by them.



On the night of the 23rd we reached Noland's River.\* As many of our oxen were much travel-worn, and some of our horses needed shoeing, we encamped upon this stream until the 26th. At this camp the officers of the expedition held a consultation to devise means for more rapid progress. While upon the prairies, it was evident that the wagons were too heavily loaded, and now that we were in a much rougher country it was deemed imperatively necessary that they should in some way be lightened. The first step towards effecting this desirable object was the throwing away a large portion of the dry beef we had brought from Austin, much of which was found to be spoiled. This meat had been provided as a last resort in case the Indians should deprive us of our cattle; but to carry it farther was considered unwise, and such portions of it as were fit for use were immediately served out to the men instead of green beef, but half the weight of the latter being given. It was also resolved to deprive us of one of our greatest comforts—the tents. There were many of them new, well-made, and easily pitched—but that there should be no repining, nor ill-feelings engendered in the camp, all the poles were burned, as well those of the officers, commissaries, and merchants as of the men. But one was saved—the hospital tent, for the use of such as might be sick—and we had now nothing to protect us from the rain or cold but our blankets and the sky. During the three days we passed on the western side of Noland's River the wagons received a thorough repairing. The fatigue men also dug away the steep banks of the stream, and cut a road through the heavy timber of the bottoms.

By the 26th of July, everything was in readiness for resuming the toilsome journey, and after crossing the river without accident, we were enabled to travel some ten miles before we encamped. The road was through a stony and hilly country, interspersed with an occasional grove of black jacks and post oaks. To the right of our line of march we saw the ruins of what had been a large Indian village, many of the wigwams being still in a partial state of preservation.

The next day we reached a small grove of timber, bounded

\* Some of our men thought it was one of the forks of the Trinity. I am inclined to believe they were wrong in their surmises, although far from confident.



on all sides by a level and beautiful prairie—an island, it would almost appear, in the heart of the Cross Timbers. The water and grass being good at this place, and the country beyond appearing rough, and our farther advance almost impossible, it was determined to remain until the spies had found some outlet from the labyrinth of difficulties in which we were entangled.

At this camp, for the first time, the latitude and longitude were taken by Mr. Falconer and Lieutenant Hull, the latter of whom had been an officer in the English navy and fully understood the use of the quadrant. According to their calculation, we were upward of two hundred miles in a course nearly north from Austin, and the distance to Santa Fé was close upon five hundred miles, the direction a little north of west. The exact latitude and longitude I made a memorandum of in my note-book, together with a description of the country through which we passed, the course each day, and the number of miles we travelled. This book is now in the hands of the Mexicans, and as a matter of course I am compelled to depend upon memory. Circumstances difficult to forget, however, occurred every few days, the dates of which were so strongly impressed upon me that I still retain them, and the events of the intervening time I am obliged to fill up, as I have said before, from memory.

The spies returned in the evening, and reported that they had found a route through the timber in a north-westerly direction—the only one in which we could travel. They stated the distance to be about twenty miles, the country covered with brush and post oaks, cut up by ravines, and without water; but it was believed that by sending a large fatigue party in advance, with shovels and axes, and by making a very early start, we could cut our way through in one day—at all events it was determined to attempt it. Mr. Navarro, although extremely lame, would not trust himself in the little Jersey wagon, but mounted a horse and left me the only passenger. Fitzgerald volunteered to drive the mules for this day only. His style of handling the reins was peculiarly of the break-neck order, but as we had to travel over a break-neck road the driving may be set down as in perfect keeping.

The morning was pleasant, but the bright July sun gave promise of an unusually hot day, and did not disappoint us. At the first gully we crossed, which was not more than half



a mile from our starting-point, two of the foremost wagons upset. The labour of righting them and repacking their heavy loads occupied some two hours, and thus it was near the middle of the day before we had made one quarter of our day's march. In the mean time, the road grew worse and worse as we advanced, the weather was unusually hot and sultry, our stock of water was soon exhausted, and with that went our patience and good temper. One difficulty was no sooner passed, than even a worse stared us in the face. The narrow passage cut for the wagons was stumpy and stony, cut up every two or three hundred yards by deep gullies, or the dry beds of what had been running streams. The ground was covered with a heavy under-growth of briars and thorn-bushes, impenetrable even by mules, and these, with the black jacks and post oaks which thickly studded the broken surface, had to be cut away; their removal only showing, in bolder relief, the rough and jagged surface of the soil which had given them existence and nourishment.

Night finally overtook us, when we were but half way through our toilsome march. By this time fatigue-men and drivers were worn down, hungry, half-choked with thirst, and completely dispirited; the oxen were jaded, unwilling or unable to draw, as well as suffering for want of water, and the imprecations bestowed upon them were louder, deeper, and more disgustingly blasphemous than ever. Several wagons had been upset, broken to pieces, and left by the roadside, while the command was scattered for miles through the woods, every one eagerly pressing forward for water, uncontrolled and uncontrollable. To make the matter worse for Fitzgerald and myself, we had fallen in the rear of the long train of wagons, with the hope of finding a better road, and it was impossible to pass them. Had we started with the party in advance, we might have pressed forward in our light wagon, and thus have reached water; as it was, we were compelled to keep the position we had originally taken in the cumbrous and gloomy procession.

To make our situation still more desperate, a dark and cloudy night followed a clear and hot day. How fervently we wished it might rain, that it might descend in torrents, and thus enable us to slake a thirst which was almost intolerable; yet while the muttering thunder plainly told us that heavy showers were passing around us, a few drops



only fell to our share—the clouds but made our march more difficult and dangerous.

Midnight came, finding us in the midst, I might say in the very thickest, of our troubles. The extended train of wagons made an unusually long stop, and while we were peering through the gloom and wondering what had caused the delay, word was passed along the line that the artillery-carriage had stuck fast in a gully some half-a-mile ahead, that most of the fatigue-men had mounted their horses and started off in search of water, and what was more annoying than all, that we must remain where we were through the night! Here was a climax to a day and night of horrors. Had I been in possession of the use of my limbs I would have started at once for water; as it was, I was compelled to bear my sufferings as best I could. Fitzgerald merely unhitched the mules from the wagon, and without taking off the harness made them fast to a neighbouring black jack with the reins. He then betook himself to the ground under our carriage, while I took an inside seat, or rather couch. Thirsty and hungry as I was, I soon fell asleep, and never woke up till morning. It must have been sheer exhaustion that induced this sleep, for my mind was certainly attuned to anything else.

When the morning light enabled us to see the surrounding objects, we discovered that our mules had broken their fastenings, and started off, probably in search of water. Here was a prospect of another annoying delay, for we could form no opinion as to the time when the mules had left, or the course they had taken. After a long search, however, they were found, led back to the wagon, and a few minutes saw us again on our journey. About the middle of the day, we finally emerged from the Cross Timbers, and a short ride across a smooth prairie brought us to our companions, who were comfortably encamped on the banks of a running spring of fresh water. Those, and those only, who have passed twenty-four hours without water, half the time under a hot broiling sun and in circumstances of feverish excitement, can judge of our feelings and sufferings—are alone able to appreciate the perfect happiness experienced as the parched lips and swollen tongue first touched the precious element. But our march of the previous day and night—never can I forget that march. I had previously travelled many weary miles,



over the worst roads, and by the worst conveyances ; I had *thought* my sufferings great during these different journeyings ; but to alter a remark of the facetious and renowned Sancho Panza, all those sufferings were cakes and gingerbread compared with what I experienced the last day and night we passed in the Cross Timbers.

We were hungry as well as dry on reaching our encampment ; so, after having slaked our thirst, we sat down to a most delicious repast. And what was this repast ? the gentle reader may ask : simply a piece of ordinary beef, cooked before a fire on a ramrod ; but keen appetites supplied bread, vegetables, and seasoning, and a heartier meal I never enjoyed. I thought, while eating, of the *gourmands* of cities, men who spend half their time in getting up an appetite to relish the delicacies placed before them—I pitied them and ate on.

It was not until a late hour in the evening that the broken wagons and scattered oxen were safely brought into camp ; if my memory serve me aright, several of the latter had strayed so far away that they were never found. The blacksmith's forge was, in the mean time, put in operation, the greatest exertions being made so to patch up the injured wagons that they would be in condition to resume the journey early on the morrow.

Now that we had made the dreaded passage of the Cross Timbers, we were sanguine in believing our troubles and difficulties over. As far as the eye could reach in a west-northwest direction, which was the course resolved upon by our guide, Mr. Howland, nothing could be seen but a succession of smooth, gently undulating prairies. From several hills in our vicinity known to many hunters who were among us, it was evident that we were within twenty miles of Red River ; in fact, the distant timber which skirts the borders of that stream was now supposed to be in sight. It was also known that we were but a short distance from an old Towish Village, a noted camping-ground for the Pawnees and other prairie Indians in their annual excursions south, in quest of buffalo.

By going directly to the banks of Red River, and attempting to follow it too closely, it was feared that we should meet with many of the deep gullies through which the waters falling during the rainy season pour themselves into that stream, and should find none but the river water



for use, which in the dry months, is characteristically brackish and unpalatable. By keeping farther out, it was thought we should not only find fresh water in greater abundance, but a far better road than by a route nearer the stream. Unfortunately for us this was the course adopted. Mr. Howland formed his plans with much judgment and deliberation: that we afterward encountered and followed a stream mistaking it for Red River, was one of those unfortunate errors against which no human foresight or prudence could have guarded. The fate of the expedition might have been altogether different had we adopted the repudiated plan, keeping on until we had reached the above stream, and then followed it so closely that there would have been no possibility of losing it.

Another important error, in the opinion of many, was the crossing of the Brazos. Had we kept directly along the ridge which divides that stream from the Colorado, we should certainly have avoided the toilsome and tedious passage of the Cross Timbers, and it may be have suffered as little from scarcity of water. This route would certainly have been much nearer, as we could have travelled almost a direct course; but to oppose it, different objections were raised. By some it was said that we should be obliged to cross large prairies abounding with salt lakes, where no fresh water could be procured; others, again, prudently contended that the country in that direction was much of it unexplored, and consequently unknown, while by crossing the Brazos, a short distance below the Camanche Peak, we were almost certain of finding fresh water every day, and a country over which the wagons could be taken. Perhaps it was better that we took the course we did:

“There’s a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them how we will;”

and until more is known of the country between the head waters of the Brazos and Colorado, it is folly to indulge in idle regrets that we did not take that course.

## CHAPTER VII.

**Trail of the Chihuahua Traders.—Dr. Whittaker lost.—Indian Dogs.—An Indian Buffalo Chase.—A recently-deserted Indian Camp.—Dr. Whittaker again among us.—Singular Chase.—Both Parties mistaken.—The supposed Red River.—Parley with a Party of Wacoos.—A Waco Village.—An Indian Musical Instrument.—High State of Civilization of the Wacoos.—Fear of the Prairie Indians of Artillery.**

We left our camp, near the western margin of the Cross Timbers, late on the morning of the last day of July, and such was the excellence of the travelling on the prairies, were able to make twelve miles on our journey. During the forenoon we crossed the great trail made the year before by the Chihuahua traders. A company of American merchants, residents of Chihuahua, had conceived the project of opening a direct trade with the United States by way of the prairies, in lieu of the circuitous and expensive route through St. Louis, Santa Fé, and El Paso del Norte.

Thinking that, by crossing the Rio Grande at a point not far from the latter town, and then taking a course nearly east, they could reach Red River, near Jonesboro, they visited the United States with the intention of testing its feasibility by experiment. Having purchased and loaded some eighty wagons, they left the western borders of Arkansas, early in the spring of 1840. No less than five months were these men employed in cutting their way through the Cross Timbers, while the heavy bottoms, and the dismal bogs and fens of Red River, were rendered thrice dreadful by constant rains. After they had passed these disheartening obstacles, and reached the open prairies, they were still three months upon the road, making eight in all. So great was the expense, and so much time was lost in crossing the prairies, that the enterprise proved a losing speculation, and has not been repeated. A company of American equestrians, with all their horses, canvass, and circus appointments generally, crossed the prairies with the traders, and afterward



performed in many of the towns and cities of Mexico with various success.

We had scarcely crossed the Chihuahua trail before we found ourselves upon a "burn," or place where the prairie grass had been lately consumed by fire. During the day we also noticed fresh Indian "sign," consisting of recent trails; and other more subtle evidences, cognisable only by the instincts of old campaigners, convinced us that we were not far from a body of savages. We passed a small creek of sluggish water during the day, but at night were obliged to encamp without any. Scarcely had the guard-fire been kindled, and the sentinels posted, before it was discovered that Dr. Whittaker, our surgeon, was missing, and no one could give the least clue to his mysterious disappearance. The band was immediately ordered out to play at different commanding points, fires were kindled on the highest rolls of the prairie around us during the night, and the cannon was fired the next morning, with the hope of attracting his attention; but he came not, and we were obliged to continue our march without him.

We had not gone more than three miles when a mean, sneaking, scurvy-looking dog came crouching and whining among us, and soon two others made their appearance. They were poor, miserable curs, half wolf apparently, and their homeless, half-starved, and forlorn condition would have protected them from the operation of any code of dog laws in Christendom. Their appearance created a good deal of speculation among us. That they were Indian dogs, and that their owners were not far distant, we were well satisfied; but why they came crying around us, and seeking our protection it was difficult to conceive, for the dog of the red man usually avoids the whites.

But a far more exciting incident than the appearance of these worthless curs took place during this day's march. Our animals had had no water the night before, and this circumstance made all anxious to press forward to a small stream which had been discovered by the spies. As a consequence, such as had good horses left the ranks—for when there is no water there is no subordination—the advance-guard left the wagons to take care of themselves, the drivers pressed their oxen forward, in the vain hope of keeping up with the mounted men, and in this way the command soon became scattered for miles along the undulating prairie, the different parties not being even within sight of each other.



Mr. Navarro, who had only mounted his horse the last day we were in the Cross Timbers, had now resumed his seat in the little wagon, Fitzgerald was still driving, when we suddenly found ourselves out of sight of any of our friends. This circumstance did not in the least alarm us, as we anticipated no immediate danger, and the trail of the advance-guard was so plainly visible on the grass that we could follow it at a rapid pace. While jogging briskly along at the foot of a prairie ridge, the roll running nearly parallel with our course, a buffalo cow came dashing madly past, and within but a few yards of us. Her tongue was out and curved inward, while her tail was carried aloft, showing that she was running in hot haste, and apparently for very life.

One of the wagon-curtains had at first prevented us from seeing aught in the rear of the buffalo; but as she swiftly sped past us, a pursuer, in the shape of an Indian, who could not be more than ten yards behind her, appeared in full view. The savage was mounted on a small but beautifully-formed bay-horse, of short, quick stride, yet fine and powerful action. He was armed with a long lance, which he held poised in his hand, while a bow and quiver were strapped to his back. His dress was a buckskin shirt, with leggins of the same material, while his long, black hair, although partially confined by a yellow band about his head, was waving in the breeze created by his rapid course along the prairie. He had scarcely got clear of the curtain, which confined our view to objects only in advance of the wagon, when another Indian was discovered following immediately in his steps.

"Los Indios! Los Indios!" said Mr. Navarro, with consternation depicted on his countenance, while he was eagerly feeling about in the bottom of the wagon for his rifle.

"Camanches!" shouted Fitz, at the same time pummeling and kicking the mules into a break-neck gallop, in the hope of soon coming up with the advance-guard, which now could not be far ahead.

"The whole tribe!" I could not help exclaiming, as I now looked out at the hinder end of the wagon, and saw still another well-mounted Indian dashing down the roll of the prairie with the speed of the wind, and to appearance, making directly for us.



This whole scene was enacted in a few seconds, and in our lame and unprotected situation, our minds were but ill at ease on the score of an attack. The appearance of the last Indian, and the reasonable supposition that a large body might be following him, induced Fitz to kick and beat the mules more zealously than before, and at such a rate of speed did they go, that the race between us and the foremost Indian was close, and for a short distance well contested; while the buffalo led her wild pursuers along directly by our side, and so near that the very earth, thrown from their horses' hoofs, rattled against the curtains of our wagon. The savages, though they must have been aware of our proximity, did not appear to bestow a single glance upon an object so strange as a Jersey wagon must have been to them, but kept their eyes steadily bent upon their prey.

With mad eagerness this strange race went on, the Indians using every endeavour to overtake and lance the unfortunate cow, while we were even more anxious to gain the protection of our friends. I had noticed, not a little to our relief, that the hindmost Indian wheeled his horse suddenly on seeing our wagon, and retraced his steps over the roll of the prairie; but the other two never deviated from their course. In a race of half-a-mile they had gained, perhaps, a hundred yards on us. An abrupt turn in the prairie ridge now concealed them from our sight, and before we had reached this point the sharp reports of several rifles, in quick succession, convinced us that our unexpected neighbours had been seen by the advance-guard, and that succour was near if needed.

From the time when the Indians were first in sight, until they were lost to view by a roll of the prairie, could not be more than five minutes, yet there was an ordinary lifetime of excitement in the scene. Had we known that there were but three, or even three times that number, and had we been in possession of our limbs, with our rifles fresh loaded and in readiness, we should have taken their sudden advent with less trepidation; but neither Mr. Narvarro nor myself could more than hop about on one foot, and our rifles were in the very bottom of the wagon, where, in our over haste, we could not get at them. We even found, on reaching camp, that our arms were not loaded; a pleasant situation, truly, for one to find himself in on being attacked by prairie



Indians, whose movements are characterized by a startling rapidity, and who must be met with the utmost promptness—yet so it was. We took special care, however, not to be caught in like predicament again.

On arriving at our encampment, which was hardly a mile from the point where the Indians had passed our wagon, we found that all was hurry and excitement. A small but well-mounted party had already set off in pursuit, and General McLeod had detailed another party who were on the eve of mounting. The savages had driven the buffalo directly into the lines, the rifle-shots we had heard turning the course of the pursuers, but not that of the pursued. The cow was shot with a musket by one of our officers, Lieutenant Scott, and found to be young, and exceedingly fat and delicious.

Our encampment was a beautiful grove of timber, and near a small stream of warm, turbid water. A few yards below was a large Indian camp, apparently but just deserted, some twenty or thirty half-starved curs still lingering about, which seemed too weak to follow their masters. From the appearance of the closely-picked fish, snake, terrapin, and pole-cat bones which were scattered about, the late occupants of the camp had suffered much from want of food, and the dogs might be supposed to have eaten nothing for weeks. The Indians who had driven the buffalo into our lines, evidently belonged to this camp. The desperation of their hunger was such as to overcome any astonishment or intimidation the appearance of our wagon might have caused, and they never gave up their chase until their prey was in our very jaws.

After enjoying the hearty dinner which had thus accidentally been thrown in our way, preparations were made for an evening march. The spies had discovered a larger stream some six miles distant, with excellent grazing in the vicinity. Before starting, General McLeod sent out two or three parties, in different directions, in quest of the Indians. Each party carried a white flag, strong hopes being entertained, notwithstanding the unfriendly reception given to the Indians who had driven the buffalo into our camp, that some of the company might be induced to come in on amicable terms. Guides were wanted, not only to inform us of our present position, but to lead or direct us onward by the best and easiest route. Not an Indian could be found



however, but one of the parties went as far as the large river north of us. The waters were described as brackish and of a brownish colour, agreeing, in every way, with the description of Red River. The stream was running nearly east, and our west-northwest course had by this time brought us within some ten miles of it.

As the command was on the eve of resuming the march, we were all rejoiced by the arrival of Dr. Whittaker, for whose safety, now that Indians had been seen almost in our very midst, the liveliest apprehensions were felt. Our worthy surgeon told us that he had halted a short distance from the line of march on the previous day, for the purpose of enjoying a short rest under a small shade tree; that he had fallen into a sleep from which he did not awake for two or three hours, and that on rising he felt that he was "turned round," or in other words, that he was completely lost, and uncertain as to the direction in which the command had come or gone. In this state of doubt he had taken a course which he supposed to be the right one, and when night came he hid himself in a quiet hollow, until daylight should allow him to continue the uncertain task of finding his companions. Fresh Indian sign he had seen in every direction, and during the night his horse, the end of whose rope he had made fast to one of his arms, gave well-known indications that an enemy was lurking in the immediate neighbourhood. With the early dawn the doctor continued his hap-hazard search. He had a good horse and rifle, with some twenty rounds of powder and ball, but he was far from being a skilful woodsman. Fortunately, I might say providentially, he came upon our trail, although at the time he was in doubt which direction we had taken. An examination of the footprints, however, gave him the course, and two hours' hard riding brought him in safety to our camp.\*

Having crossed the sluggish stream upon which the Indian camp was situated, we journeyed on some two hours until we reached the new quarters found for us by our spies. This situation was in a beautiful cove of the prairie, nearly surrounding a skirting of timber. Our camp was upon the

\* Dr. Whittaker has since paid the debt of nature. He was liberated at the city of Mexico with the rest of the Santa Fé prisoners, but died at Puente Nacional, of yellow fever, on his way home. He was a generous-hearted and brave man, and left many warm friends.



banks of what appeared to be a large stream in the rainy season, though now there was but little water in its bed. Its course was nearly northeast, and those among us who pretended to know anything about the country at once concluded that it was the Wichita,\* a stream that was said to empty into Red River high up, and about which but little was known except by trappers and Indians. Unfortunately for us we had none of these in our company. Finding excellent grass, water, and timber, upon the banks of this stream, we remained the next day to recruit our cattle and repair some of the wagons. The spies were sent out in the mean time, to examine the country and find a good route. At night we had an eclipse of the moon, without any one knowing that such an occurrence was to take place; the next morning many and queer were the speculations, especially among the guard, as to what caused the singular appearance of the heavens.

Although still unable to bear much weight upon my foot, or walk without great pain, I made out to mount my horse, with assistance, on the 3rd of August, and bade farewell to the old Jersey wagon in which I had journeyed nearly six weeks. Scarcely had we gone three miles that morning, before a small herd of buffalo was seen quietly feeding in a valley to the right. It was the first opportunity that had been offered me of enjoying the excitement of a chase, and I immediately dashed after them; but the hard gait of my horse over the rough prairie pained my ankle so much that I was obliged to give it up.

Another chase came off, however, on the same day, which, for excitement, fairly went beyond any thing in the way of horse-racing. One of the volunteers had set out in search of water by himself, and a short time after, without knowing that he had gone, Major Howard left the command on the same errand. By accident they came suddenly upon each other in a little valley, and the man, mistaking Major H. for an Indian, set off at full speed. The latter, also thinking the other an Indian, gave chase with a yell, and away they bounded across the prairies as fast as their horses would

\* On some of the maps the reader will find this river put down as the *Big Washita*. I believe the correct spelling and pronunciation to be *Wichita*, but the general course of the stream has been wrongly laid down.



carry them. The first part of the chase was plainly seen by many of us, and created the greatest interest. The major was by far the best mounted of the two, and was also a bold and dashing rider; but he was a much heavier man than the pursued, and this gave the latter an advantage. The chase continued until both were out of sight, Major H. slowly gaining upon the supposed Indian by his superior riding. On one or two occasions the former raised a pistol to shoot the other, and nothing prevented it but a desire to bring him into camp alive. Finally he came up with the chase, both horses nearly broken down, when the frightened volunteer turned his pale face imploringly around, and recognised, in his pursuer, the well-known major, with a pistol cocked in his right hand.

"Wh—wh—why, major," he exclaimed, stammering from fright—"Why, major, is that *you*? D—d—dont shoot me. Is it really you, major?"

"Certainly it is, and I'm not going to shoot you; but what, in the name of common sense, did you take me for, and what induced you to run so fast?"

"I—I—I—thought you was an Indian—indeed I did," replied the man, still pale and trembling from his recent terror.

"Well," continued the major, "I thought you an Indian too, and you ought to consider yourself lucky that I did not shoot you for one."

In the course of an hour Major Howard rode into camp with his prisoner, who was really half frightened to death. In fact, the man afterward died on the road, and those who knew him best, said he never got over the "scare." It may appear, singular that two white men could mistake each other for Indians; but it should be recollected that we were in an Indian range, and the small parties that went out were in constant expectation of meeting gangs of them. It should also be borne in mind that the dresses we wore were any thing and every thing that came handy, and conduced most to our comfort while upon the solitary prairies. After being out two months upon a campaign, any man will regard his personal convenience more than his personal appearance, and hence we all more resembled Indians in dress than civilized men. The hot sun and winds of the prairies had also embrowned our faces to a light mahogany colour, while our hair, allowed to remain uncut, in every case where it



was black made the resemblance to the red man still more close and striking.

On arriving at camp that evening, it was found that Frank Combs was missing, and with him young Curtis Caldwell, son of the old captain of the spy company. Knowing as we did that so many enemies were in our neighbourhood, their absence caused great solicitude; but they came in shortly after our guard fires had been kindled.

About nine o'clock at night we had a tremendous shower, which continued until near daylight. When the water first came trickling through my blanket, I thought of snug rooms, clean bed, moscheto bars, and all that sort of thing; but while thinking of them, I fell asleep, and never had a better night's rest in my life, although I woke at daybreak wet to the skin. The heavier part of the shower was over when we crawled from our soaked blankets; there was yet a misty, drizzling rain, however, and we were compelled to continue the march that morning in wet clothes.

From the higher rolls of the prairies we could now distinctly see, to the right and in a northern direction, the dim outline of a belt of timber running nearly parallel with our course, supposed by all to be the skirting of Red River. A Mexican named Carlos, a native of Taos, in New Mexico, who was attached to one of the companies, now for the first time said that he had trapped up and down Red River, and knew every part of it; that the country around us resembled in every respect the vicinity of that stream, and that he had no doubt we were now close upon the Red River bottoms. So plausible were his stories, and his knowledge of the country appeared so extensive, that he was immediately transferred to the spy company; and here I might add, that Carlos had been employed as mail-carrier between Austin and San Antonio for several years, and had always been found an honest and trustworthy fellow. This circumstance was related when his claims as a person entitled to credit were canvassed in camp, and went far to establish for him a character for probity which few of his countrymen of the same class receive or deserve.

As we desired neither to cross the river to our right, nor approach too near its wooded bottoms, our course was now altered a point or two—perhaps more, as I noticed we were frequently travelling a little south of west. The fog, clouds, and drizzling rain of the early morning had dispersed before



the middle of the forenoon, the sun coming out intolerably hot. Some two hours after meridian, the advance-guard, with which I was now in company, came up with the spies, comfortably encamped in a small grove of timber on the margin of a dry creek, where they were anxiously awaiting our approach.

On the arrival of General McLeod, the spies had an exciting adventure to relate. They had met and held a parley with a body of Indian warriors, about their own number, all well armed and mounted, many of them upon large and powerful American horses which had evidently been stolen. They were large, athletic men, sat boldly and proudly upon their fat and well-trained steeds ; and while many of them had American rifles in their hands, and were far better dressed than the Camanches, Cayguas. and other prairie Indians, their manner was stately and overbearing. Their quick and experienced eyes, as they ran over the jaded and travel-worn animals of the spies, at once convinced them that they could outrun, if not outfight them, and hence their daring and insolent behaviour.

Not one of the Indians could speak English ; but there were two or three of them who had picked up a smattering of Spanish, and Carlos, from the affinity their language bore to the Camanche, which he partially understood, was enabled to carry on a conversation. They frankly declared that they had been watching our movements three or four days, and with cool effrontery asked the spies whether we had come for peace or war. The answer was, that our intentions were peaceful ; that we were journeying towards Santa Fé with merchandise, and had many wagons and a large force a short distance in the rear. The Indians retorted by saying that they knew all this well enough—they had seen and measured our entire strength. They were next asked if they could direct us on our journey by the best route, which would afford the most grass and water ; all the Texans wanted was to cultivate a peaceful understanding with these men, and to obtain their assistance in furthering us on our journey.\* The questions of the spies were answered in a sullen, swaggering manner, so much so that

\* General McLeod was really anxious to encourage friendly relations with these savages ; but they appeared to be far from disposed to reciprocate, probably distrusting his motives.



Captain Caldwell—than whom no man in Texas better understood the treacherous and uncertain “ways” of every tribe upon its borders—at once remarked to his men, in a low tone and in English, that “these fellows looked *ugly* and *fighty*, and that they must all keep an eye upon their rifles, and be ready to give them a volley should he make a signal.” It was thought, by many of the spies, that some one of the Indians could understand English, as a movement towards examining the flints and caps upon the rifles of the former was met by a corresponding movement on the part of the red men.

Captain Caldwell next asked his new acquaintances to what tribe they belonged. They told him they were Wacoes, and volunteered the information that a party of two hundred Camanches had been residing near them for some little time, but that they had recently left for the more western prairies. In addition, they said that they themselves were now out on a hunting expedition, and that their village was a long way off. Captain C. now requested them to remain with him until our commander arrived, as the latter was extremely anxious to see and have a friendly talk with them. A few muttered sentences passed between them in their own language at this request, when the principal chief replied that he would return at night and visit our camp and its leader. The fellows then went off at a brisk gallop, and were soon lost to sight by an undulation of the prairie.

Anxious to ascertain the movements of these Indians, Captain Caldwell, the moment they had disappeared, sent out Tom Hancock and another trusty spy to watch them. They returned in an hour, and said that they had discovered a large village some five miles distant in a northern direction, situated upon the banks of a stream, and that, from the general appearance of the country, we should be compelled to pass, with our wagons, directly through the town. Our officers now held a short and hurried consultation, at which it was determined to despatch fifty of our best-mounted men directly to the village. A flag of truce was taken, so that an amicable understanding might be brought about, if possible, with fellows who could make themselves exceedingly troublesome if they felt so disposed, and at the same time the party examined well their arms, to be ready in case the Indians should receive them in a hostile manner.



As I was now able to ride, and felt anxious to be among the first to enter the village, I mounted my horse and accompanied the party. The advance-guard under General McLeod followed at a convenient distance, ready to support us should hostilities ensue.

When within a couple of miles of the Indian village, a beautiful spectacle suddenly presented itself. Before us was a large and delightful valley, through which a river coursed along, with just trees enough to relieve the eye without concealing any of the beauties. In a large bend of the stream the village was situated, and all around were the corn-fields, pumpkin and melon patches of the inhabitants. In the distance, on the other side, the prairie rose gently, without a tree or bush to destroy the uniformity of the rich carpeting of green with which it was covered; in a western and southwestern direction, exactly on our course should we not cross the river, the country appeared rugged and broken, and offering the greatest difficulty to our progress with the wagons.

As we descended the long wave of the prairie which overlooked the valley, we could see that all was bustle and commotion in the village, now scarce a mile distant. Suddenly a considerable party was seen, dashing off to the south-west, accompanied by a large troop of horses. We were not near enough to distinguish, with certainty, but saw enough to convince us that this party was composed of the women and children, as well as old men of the tribe, and that with these they were despatching all their superfluous horses. This seemed to indicate that our own reception would be anything but pacific, as the warriors always send off their families and movable property when they themselves make a stand; but our party kept steadily on. Some of the older Indian fighters cast glances back, to measure the amount of support we might receive from the command in case we should be attacked, while all looked well to their powder-horns and bullet-pouches, and examined their flints and percussion-caps, to see that all was right. In low and hurried tones one volunteer would ask another for a few caps or ball patches, or for a spare flint, and the whole face of things began to assume an aspect decidedly belligerent, when suddenly another party was seen dashing from the village and following directly in the footsteps of the former and larger throng. We were now within less than half a mile, and it was evident



enough that the latter party was composed of warriors only, or grown men. Before we had reached the river, which bounded the village on its southern side, still another party was seen flying off in a northern direction, ascending the undulating prairie on the opposite side of the town.

From these movements it now appeared evident that the Indians were deserting their heretofore peaceful home; yet thinking there might still be some of the tribe remaining, Van Ness and Carlos were sent forward with the white flag. As they entered the village a solitary Indian, the last of his tribe that had remained to this time, was seen emerging from the opposite side and dashing off at lightning speed on the trail of his brothers. Thus, in certainly less than half an hour, was the Wacoe village deserted by all its inhabitants, and in even less time, not one of them could be seen in any direction upon the prairies.

A small party of us crossed the river and entered the deserted town. Everything gave evidence of the hasty departure of the inhabitants. Fires were still burning in the vicinity of every lodge or wigwam, and earthen pots were found, in which pumpkins were still boiling. Deer, antelope, and wolf skins, sewed up and full of corn, were left in their haste, and everything betokened the unexpectedness of our approach, and the suddenness of their flight. Not having time to examine everything as closely as I wished, I recrossed the river, with the intention of visiting the village at an early hour in the morning. The command had arrived, and a camping-ground been chosen, by the time I reached the opposite side of the stream. The site of this camp was near a corn-field, the position rendered strong by a grove of heavy timber immediately in our rear. The river would have been crossed had there been a sufficiency of grass on the opposite side for our animals. Strict orders were given not to touch or molest anything belonging to the Indians, and at the same time, fearing lest they might undertake a night surprise, every preparation was made to guard against such uncertain neighbours. We reasonably anticipated that the Wacoos would at least make an attempt to *stampede* and steal some of our horses and cattle; yet the guard were not disturbed, and the night passed off quietly.

Early in the morning I visited the village on the other side of the river. The water of this stream was slightly brackish, enough to make it unpalatable as a beverage, but for boiling



meat or making coffee it answered very well. We felt confident that the Indians must have a supply of fresh water near, but were unable to find the springs from which they procured it. The village itself was situated at the western extremity of a large bend in the river, and although the bend must have been some five or six miles in length, by nearly two in breadth in the wider parts, every portion of it appeared to be under cultivation, and the land was extremely fertile. The purlieus of the village appeared to be kept clean, which can be said of few Indian towns.

The wigwams—or houses, rather, for they really deserve that name—appeared to be built in rows, and had an air of neatness and regularity about them such as I had never observed before in an Indian village. They were of conical shape, some twenty or twenty-five feet in height, and of about the same diameter on the floor, the materials used in their construction being poles, buffalo hides, and rushes. The poles were stuck in the ground, and after running up perpendicularly some ten feet, were bent over so as to converge to a point at the top, thus giving a regular dome-like slope to carry off the rains. Over these, buffalo hides in some instances were made fast, and these again were covered with long rushes—thus making thatched cottages, impervious to dust or rain.

Within many of the houses, at an elevation of four or five feet from the ground, was a row of berths extending nearly the whole circuit, and very neatly got up. The bottom of these berths appeared to be of rough basket work, the frame which supported them being of large poles. As all the cooking for the family was done out of doors, their lodges had neither fireplaces nor chimneys. The inhabitants had carried off the principal part of their furniture, but had still left enough, from the haste with which they departed, to convince us that for Indians they lived in much comfort, and not a little style. Attached to each residence, and immediately in the rear, was another building of smaller dimensions, the lower part of which was evidently used as a corn-crib and storehouse. In these buildings we found a quantity of corn and pumpkins, besides finely-cured venison, antelope and buffalo meat. Above the corn-crib was a species of balcony, although without a railing, and this led into a small room in the second story, if I may so call it. One of the company said that this room was the sleeping apartment of the young



and marriageable squaws of the family, and that their mother kept a ladder by which they climbed up to it at night and were let down in the morning. This story may be true and may be not—I tell it as it was told me.

In one of the main buildings an instrument, evidently intended for musical purposes, was found. It was made of cane, and in some respects resembled a fife, although much longer, it had five holes for the fingers, besides a mouth-piece somewhat after the fashion of a clarionet. The notes of the instrument were nearly as soft as those of a flageolet, the workmanship extremely neat, and evincing not only ingenuity but taste; and, after hearing the story of the ladder, I could not help thinking that this same instrument had, perchance, while in the hands of some Indian Romeo, discoursed most eloquent music to a belle of the tribe, who, like Juliet, would step out on her balcony and pour forth her love and fealty to her soul's idol in return for this sweet token of his homage. He would then, very possibly, tell of his flaming, burning, and inextinguishable passion—recount to her his perilous 'scapes in the chase—talk of buffalo hunts, mustangs, war-paths, bear-fights, corn-dances, and scalps; while she, eagerly devouring each word, would throw back volumes of tender affection—tell what she would do for him, where she would go for him, how she was willing to pack meat, make mocassins, hoe corn, dig potatoes, and do out-door work generally, besides sitting up of nights for his sake, and for no other person's sake would she do a thing. He would then, as in duty bound, drop on one knee, lay down his lute, and conjure her to fly—instantly fly with him, on a chosen steed, to the farthest prairies—fly anywhere, everywhere, so that she was with him, and only him. With beating heart and lip trembling with emotion, she would tell him that her mother had carried off the ladder, and that she dared not, even for his sake, run the risk of breaking her neck by jumping down. Such might have been a scene to which this humble instrument I now held in my hand had been a witness; and then, again, it might not.

Little skilled am I in the vocabulary of a Indian girl's pledges of love; but as in these affairs between parties in civilized life each makes out as long a catalogue as possible of what he or she intends to do to make the other completely happy, it is more than probable that the case is the same among the uncivilized children of the prairies. Love



is a very pretty theme for poets to dwell upon, and many of them have been known to *live* upon it in the absence of more substantial food; but there is far more of matter-of-fact even in this same love than your sentimentalists would make us believe, and occasionally those afflicted with it have a decided preference for mush, mutton, and safety, over moonbeams, moss-banks, and incensed mothers—and hence the Indian girl's repugnance to leaping the balcony. This is all mere speculation—the reader may take it for what it is worth, while I return to my narrative.

We spent two or three hours in the pleasant village, examining the houses, implements, manner of cooking, cultivating the land, and other matters. I will not say that the Wacoes know as much of civilization as the Cherokees or Choctaws, who have had the opportunity of intercourse with the whites; have had their eyes opened somewhat to the plan of civil government by their treaty dealings with the United States, and been made to know something of the system of the Christian religion by the pious zeal of missionaries. I have seen all these tribes, and while the Wacoes did not exhibit any of those fruits of civilization which too often mar the virgin leaf of those other nations, I confess that I saw evidence of a more elevated kind of humanity than I had supposed was to be found anywhere among the original Americans.

Near the centre of the village was a house of larger dimensions and more elaborate workmanship than any of the other dwellings. This may have been the general council house, or the abode of the medicine man of the tribe, or it may have been the residence of their principal chief, who must needs, as is the custom in more civilized nations, live in better quarters and more costly style than his subjects. Be this as it may, it was there, and afforded additional food for the mind to speculate upon.

The Wacoes, although not a numerous, are certainly a brave and warlike, and consequently a strong tribe when compared with the Pawnees and Camanches. Like the latter, they are said to be always on horseback, and equally well skilled in the uses of that noble animal; but here the comparison ends, for the Wacoes have comfortable houses, and corn fields, and many luxuries to which their prairie neighbours are strangers. The Wacoes have never been corrupted by association with the whites, nor made weak



and effeminate by the use of alcohol; and here again they enjoy advantages. In the early history of Texas they were at peace with the inhabitants of that Republic. Large hunting parties of the tribe were frequently seen within her limits, and every relation appeared to bring additional peace and harmony, until an unfortunate affray occurred which induced them to dig up the tomahawk, and since that time many have been the inroads they have committed along the northern frontiers of Texas.

I heard it stated that the whites were guilty of bringing on this war by some act of bad faith towards the Wacoes, and the wound they then received has never been healed. From the fact of their hurrying off their women and children, as well as their large *cavallada* of horses and mules, it was evident that they placed no reliance in our assertion that we came among them with pacific intentions—they had been deceived by our men once, and Indian-like, looked for another violation of our words.

The village we visited probably contained three or four hundred inhabitants, and there were others, both up and down the river, which we could see in the distance. A crossing of the river was effected about ten o'clock in the morning, and after winding slowly through the village, the command continued the journey along the fertile bottoms of the river, our course a little south of west. Carlos said confidently that it was the Red River, and no one doubted, for a moment, that we were upon the banks of that stream, some distance above Coffee's Upper Station. The latter is a well known trading house high up on Red River, and the place where the different Indian tribes rendezvous to barter off their skins for rifles, blankets, and ammunition.

At night we encamped upon the banks of the stream. Although the waters of the river, as I have before remarked, were brackish, a pure and fresh stream was discovered close by. This was used by the men, but the cattle and horses would not touch it when they could obtain the river water.

All the spoil we took from the Waco village consisted of a few pumpkins; the houses and every thing about them were left untouched. Fine fish were now caught in the stream, which, with our regular rations of beef and the pumpkins we had procured in the morning, gave us a feast. Many of my readers may think this but a meagre feast—



boiled beef, fried fish, and boiled pumpkins—but they should recollect that we had eaten no vegetable substance for nearly two months, and that even fried catfish was a rare dainty.

During the day, Indians were seen scouting about on the distant hills, watching our movements; but our position was a strong one, and although we anticipated, no one feared the consequences of a night attack, farther than the danger of having our horses run off.

The fact that the Indians did not make an attack upon us, or attempt to steal our horses, was probably owing to the circumstance that they had seen our six-pounder. It is well known that the Camanches and other prairie tribes have the greatest dread of cannon, and can never be induced to approach within a mile of them. The story is told that a large party of Camanches attacked, many years since, one of the early Missouri expeditions journeying with a small cannon, loaded with grape shot and rifle bullets.

So greatly did the savages outnumber the traders, that they felt confident of an easy and sudden victory, and impressed with this belief attacked them in a solid body, and with their usual yells. The traders calmly waited until they had approached within a few yards, when they let fly among them the unexpected shower of missiles. The gun was well directed, and sent a large number of the Indians tumbling to the ground. Those who escaped were so panic stricken at the strange discharge, which carried such fearful destruction to their ranks, that they instantly wheeled and fled, and could not be induced to renew the attack. Overrating, as they did, the power of a cannon from the effect of this well-directed and fortunate shot, from that day to the present, no party of the tribe has ever dared attack openly any company fortunate enough to possess a field-piece. The fame of the big gun of the whites, so it is said, has spread from the Camanches to the neighbouring tribes, and to such an extent has the story of its powers been magnified, that it is difficult to get an Indian within its utmost range.



## CHAPTER VIII.

**Join the Spy Company.—Visit from Mustangs.—Indians in Sight.—Rough Travelling.—Scanty Rations.—A Shower and a Stampede.—A Labyrinth of Difficulties.—A Hunting Adventure.—Get Lost upon the Prairie.—A Ride through a Rattlesnake Region.—Three of the Texans sent forward to the Settlements.—A Buffalo Chase.—An Adventure with Deer.—“Buck Ague.”**

On the 6th of August I joined the spy company. By this time I was able to ride without pain, although I walked with much difficulty, and required assistance in mounting my horse.

The course of the stream we were upon was a little south of east—to follow it up was not the right direction to Santa Fé, but as every one supposed that we must be on Red River, there was no suspicion that we were not taking the true route in doing so. At times, as we journeyed along its fertile bottoms, some bend of the stream would bring us directly upon its banks, which were fringed with a few cotton-wood trees; again, the river would turn away abruptly, leaving us at a distance of several miles from its waters. It was now low, being fordable in many places. Its bed may have been sixty or seventy yards in width, its banks, in many places, high and steep, and giving evidence that in the rainy season there was depth of water, sufficient to float the largest steamers.

There were two great advantages in marching with the spies: one was the opportunity of meeting with more exciting adventure, while the other was the brisk pace at which we travelled, being a steady trot, instead of the snail-like movement of the wagons. On the day when I joined them, after a pleasant ride of some ten miles, we arrived at a small creek of fresh and running water, a delicious treat on a hot prairie march. It was a beautiful stream, overhung with grape and other vines, now in the full richness of summer verdure. In many places the vines had completely



crossed the creek, thus forming a delightful natural arbour, and under this cool shade the restless waters swept along to mingle with the hot and brackish river, now some two or three miles to the south. After finding an easy crossing-place, a man was sent back to the command as a guide, while we unsaddled and turned our horses loose, to graze, and then threw ourselves upon the green carpeting of grass under the shade-trees, to enjoy a quiet noonday siesta.

We scarcely had time to establish ourselves comfortably, before three or four mustangs were seen approaching at a rapid gallop. Ever and anon they would halt for a moment, throw up their heads, as if to scan us more closely, and then, as though not satisfied with the scrutiny, would again approach at the same rapid pace. It may be that they could not see us while reclining under the shade-trees, or mistook our animals for some of their own wild companions; be this as it may, they approached within a few hundred yards, wheeling and dashing about with all the joyousness of unrestrained freedom, and occasionally stopping to examine our encampment more closely. The leader was a bright bay, with long and glossy black tail and mane. With the most dashing and buoyant action he would trot around our camp, and throw aloft his beautifully-formed head, as if, after the manner of some ringleted school girl, to toss the truant hair from his eyes. Then he would lash his silken tail, shake his flowing mane in pride, and eye us with looks that plainly told his confidence in his powers of flight should danger or treachery be lurking in our vicinity. I had formed a strong attachment for my own powerful bay, for he was gentle as a house-dog, and would run all day if necessity required it; yet I would instantly have "swapped" even him for this wild horse of the prairies, with no other knowledge of his qualities, than what I could discover at the distance of a hundred and fifty or two hundred yards.

After gambolling about us for some little time, his bright eyes apparently gleaming with satisfaction, as if conscious that we were watching and admiring his showy points, he suddenly wheeled, and, in a canter, placed himself at a more prudent distance. Then he turned again to take another look, curved his beautiful neck, once more tossed his head, half timidly, half in sport, pawed the ground playfully, and again dashed off. Several times he turned to take still



another look at our encampment, and even in the far distance we could distinguish his proud and expanded nostrils, his bright, flashing eyes, and the elastic movements of his symmetrical limbs, as he playfully pranced and curvetted about. I watched him until he was but a speck upon the prairie, and then turned from gazing, with regret that he was not mine.

The Indians and Mexicans have a way of capturing mustangs by running upon their fleetest and most untiring horses and noosing them with the *lariat*. The white hunters have also a method, which is often successful, of taking the wild horses. It is called *creasing*, and is done by shooting them with a rifle-ball upon a particular cord or tendon in the neck, immediately under the mane. If the ball takes effect precisely in the right spot the animal falls benumbed, and without the power to move for several minutes, when he is easily secured. Should it strike too low, the horse is still able to run off, but eventually dies. An attempt was made to *crease* the magnificent steed I have mention ; but it was impossible to approach near enough to shoot with accuracy, and to endanger his life would have been a wanton act, which the most eager hunter among us would not have committed. When our provisions became scarce several of these animals were shot for their flesh. It seems repugnant to the feelings to eat horseflesh ; but the meat is tender and finely flavoured, and a three-year old mustang is really better food than either buffalo or common beef.

After the mustangs left us we passed two hours very agreeably in a shade which completely screened us from the hot, noonday sun. In the cool of the evening, we once more saddled our horses and continued the march in close order. Deer and antelope were seen in every direction, but as they were at too great distance to be shot from the ranks, not one of them was killed. Our party was small, and as Indians were seen several times during the day, watching us from the different swells of the prairie, it was deemed prudent to keep close and in a body. The Indians seen were to the right of our line of march ; that bodies of them were also watching us from the timber on the left was more than probable, as there they could find secure hiding-places. At nightfall we encamped upon the banks of the river, and were obliged to drink the brackish water or none, as no fresh spring could be found. An abundance of the finest



catfish were caught in the stream, the bed of which was here nearly a hundred yards in width.

Again a strong position was chosen for our camp, and the guard had strict orders to keep a good look-out at night, to prevent a surprise from the Wacoos. It was evident that they were watching us at every turn, and while their fears prevented them from attacking us openly in a body, they were still, as is their custom, looking out for an opportunity to *stampede* our horses and cattle, or cut off any little straggling party that might wander from camp in search of water or to hunt. The night passed, however, without a visit from them, and the only inconvenience occasioned by their proximity fell upon our horses, for we were compelled to hobble them well and stake them inside the lines of sentinels, where the grass was soon cropped close to the ground.

For three days after leaving the village of the Wacoos our route was along the wide and fertile bottoms of the river. Our course, as already mentioned, was a little south of west, but being confident that we were on the banks of Red River, it was thought from day to day that the stream would soon turn off more to the north.

On the opposite or south side of the river the country had been rugged and broken up by hills—on the side along which we were travelling, nothing could be seen but a boundless and unbroken prairie, with naught to destroy its sameness except here and there a light fringing of trees bordering the banks of the small creeks and rivulets, which, rising in the prairies to the north, found their way to the river after flowing many miles along cool and secluded courses. Rack fancy to the utmost, and it is still impossible to draw a picture of more enchanting, sylvan, loveliness, than some of the beautiful arches formed over these murmuring streamlets. In many places the limbs of the trees which decked either bank would cross over as if to commune and shake hands, one with the other. Along these the wandering grape vines would creep, lock themselves, as it were, in each other's embrace on meeting, and thus form a cool and delicious arbour, so closely interwoven that not a solitary ray from the sun could reach the recess below. Under these natural arches the deer would while away the hot, mid-day hours, slaking his thirst from the gently flowing waters which were gliding with sweet music at his



feet; there, too, we saw the solitary white heron, standing tall and erect, like some elfin spirit. Our approach would frighten him from his secret place, only to seek some other lonely dell of equal beauty, coolness, and seclusion. Such scenes of rural beauty—of soft, pure, unsophisticated nature, are clearly, brightly, painted upon my memory—but I am utterly wanting in the power to delineate them.

Our encampment on the banks of the river we left early in the morning, the spies starting some hours in advance in search of fresh water and the best route for the wagons. We had travelled but a few miles, when the country before us appeared more rough and broken, and by mid-day the hills and gullies we encountered almost prevented the farther progress of the wagons. The spies, finally, were fortunate in finding a fresh-water river, running into the larger and brackish stream, and after much fatigue and trouble a crossing place was discovered, which we were able to reach with our wagons. The banks, on the side at which we approached, were high and steep, offering serious obstacles; on the opposite side of the river, a gradual ascent from the water led to a pleasant valley. Carlos, the Mexican, at once pronounced it the Rio Utau, or Eutaw, a stream upon which he said he had often trapped; and to give his story greater plausibility, he said that at the very point where we made the passage, the Mexican hunters had frequently crossed, with carts laden with dry buffalo meat.

There really was every appearance of an old wagon road when we reached the opposite side of the river, and if any one had previously doubted the statements of Carlos, those doubts were now set at rest. He said that he was as well acquainted with the country in the vicinity as with his mother's door-yard, and spoke of the country beyond with a plausibility that convinced all, of his being now "perfectly at home." He said that the *angosturas*, or narrows of Red River, were distant only some seventy miles, and that the same distance beyond would bring us to the Mexican *ranchos*, or farms, in the immediate vicinity of the frontier town of San Miguel.

Placing confidence as we did in his reports, it is needless to say that all was joy and congratulation in camp that evening. Our beef, the only thing we had in the shape of provision, was now becoming extremely poor, from the fatiguing marches, and want of grass and water. Our sugar



was all gone, and although our coffee still held out, we were too near the end of that great luxury to expect that it would last much longer. Independent of this, many of us began to think, in earnest, that bread, if not *the* staff of life, offered at least a very comfortable support. We still had our regular allowance, three pounds of beef a day, but it was greatly inferior in comparison with the same allowance we had in the earlier stages of our journey, and this inferiority began to be felt seriously. Nevertheless, all was joy and gladness in camp at the good news of our near approach to settlements, and it was thought that twenty days, at farthest, would bring us to the rich wheat and corn fields, as well as the sheep-folds of New Mexico. Far different would have been our feelings had we anticipated the sufferings yet in store for us.

Had we known that four or five hundred miles of dreary travelling were still before us, and that hunger and thirst were to weaken our frames and destroy our spirits; had we been aware that hostile Indians, in great numbers, were in our paths, and treacherous friends—if it be not a solecism—in our very midst, far different would have been our expectations and our feelings that night, on betaking ourselves to our earth, our blankets, and our sky.

Scarcely had we finished our scanty and homely supper, and quietly nestled ourselves, each on the spot he had chosen for his lodging-ground, when a drizzling rain set in, which, before sleep had visited our eyelids, deepened into a heavy shower. Our encampment was in a grove of small timber, within some thirty yards of the river. A flock of hooting, screeching owls, had engaged a cotton-wood tree, almost directly over our heads, for the purpose of giving a grand concert, while a pack of sneaking wolves were howling a horrible accompaniment, in the edge of the prairie near us. In the very midst of this discord, our oxen, which had been quietly feeding in a neighbouring prairie, took a *stampede*, and came rushing madly towards us. The earth fairly trembled as they bounded along, many of them with their yokes still on, and all impelled by an indescribable panic. I took to a tree at once, or rather, clambered up a small sapling, hand over hand, to place myself out of harm's way, for I well knew that no human obstacle could check the onward career of a drove of fear-stricken oxen. Fortunately, the steep bank of the river, on the opposite side, or some other cause,



stopped them in their headlong flight. The guard were unable to collect and herd them that night, yet they were all found without much trouble the next morning. What could have given them the "scare" no one could divine. The cattle-guard declared that they suddenly started off in a body, as if impressed by a common fear, and that in the hurry-seurry they had no time except to look to their own personal safety. Some of the old campaigners hinted that the cries of owls and wolves, heard a short time before the stampede, were but imitations of these birds and beasts by Indians in the vicinity, and that some lurking savage had frightened the oxen. Whatever the cause, I knew the effect well enough; and, in my half-asleep, half-awake condition, felt well satisfied that I had not been run over and trodden under foot.

Our start, on the ensuing morning, was late, several hours having been occupied in drying our blankets, and collecting the scattered beeves. We had marched but a short distance before it was evident to all that the stream we had been following up—the same we had crossed at the Waco village—now bore more to the northward, and that from the appearance of the country before us, we should be compelled to recross it. This troublesome labour was effected in the afternoon with no little difficulty, and night found us once more encamped near its banks, with no other than its brackish waters to drink.

By this time both buffalo and Indian "sign" had become extremely scarce, and the little seen, appeared to be months old. The general impression among our older hunters, whose opinions we all looked upon as law and gospel, was that the buffalo had all gone north, and the Indians with them; for, although natural enemies, they are seldom seen except in company.

The next day we made but six or seven miles, the country in every direction becoming more and more broken. Ahead, we saw nothing but chains of steep and rugged mountains; low, but of sufficient height to render our farther advance extremely problematical, at least in the right course. At night, we found a small spring of fresh water, within a mile of the river, and, in the luxury of a cool, sweet draught, forgot the hardships and privations of the previous twenty-four hours.

Carlos still insisted that he was acquainted with the



country, and that he could extricate us, in a day or two, from the labyrinth of difficulties by which we were surrounded. An early start was made the next morning, and near half the day was spent in climbing steep and abrupt hills, so rocky, that the feet of the oxen suffered severely, and many of them had to be unyoked and turned loose. I thought I had previously seen a country in a state of nature, but this was the roughest part of "out doors" it had ever been my unfortunate lot to traverse. It appeared to have been just *got out* rough hewn, without a single finishing stroke in any quarter. Rough and mis-shapen hills, formed of rocks and sand, were piled up here and there without system or order, and not a bush or blade of grass could be found upon them, to relieve their desolate appearance.

By noon we had partially extricated ourselves from the maze of hills on which our feet had been stumbling during that morning's march. Seeing what appeared to be a level and grassy prairie, a mile or a mile and a half to the left of our line of march, which seemed as though it might afford pasturage for a stray deer or antelope, myself and "Old Paint" rode off in that direction. As the old hunter expected, we quickly saw a drove of some fifteen deer; but they happened to see us first, and set off on a run. My companion was well enough versed in their "ways" not to think of following them; for after having once seen an enemy, the deer seldom allows him to come within gunshot.\*

My experience, in comparison with that of the veteran borderer, was limited, and I was simple enough not to resist the temptation of following the herd over a roll of the prairie, in the vain hope of obtaining a shot. They halted, as I supposed they would, but were on the look out, and before I was within three hundred yards, again bounded off across the prairie. Hope induced me to give one more trial, which terminated like the first. I now reluctantly gave up the chase and cast my eyes about for my fellow-hunter, but he was nowhere in sight. I tried hurriedly to ascertain the direction in which I had left him; but the result of my reflection convinced me that I was, to use a common expression, thoroughly "turned round"—lost. I put spurs to my horse and galloped to the highest roll of the prairie, with the hope of obtaining a

\* It appears to be a point of honour with an old hunter never to follow a deer after the animal has once discovered him.



sight of my companion or companions, but without success.

A sickening feeling of loneliness came over me on finding myself in that worst of all situations upon a prairie—lost! The sun was still high in the heavens, and I could not tell which was north or which south. I had my rifle and pistols with me, was well mounted, and had a sufficiency of ammunition, but I was not well enough acquainted with a prairie life to steer a course, even if I had known what course to start upon, neither was I hunter enough to feel confident that I could kill a sufficiency of meat in case I should be unsuccessful in finding my companions. Another thing: I had already found out, what every hunter knows, that the more hungry a man grows upon the prairies the more unlikely he is to find game, and the more difficult it is to shoot it. There, then, I was, without a companion and without experience—starvation staring me in the face, or even if I were fortunate in obtaining meat, I still was almost certain to be killed and scalped by the Indians, or end my days in vain efforts to reach the settlements. I thought of home, and made up my mind firmly that if ever I was fortunate enough to reach it, I should be in no particular hurry to leave it again.

I dashed off to what appeared a still higher prairie swell than the one I now stood upon—nothing could I see except a solitary wolf, trotting stealthily along in the hollow below me: I even envied this most contemptible of the brute creation, for he knew where he was. I strained my eyes as though to penetrate beyond the limits of human vision; but all was a waste, a blank. I leaped from my horse and sat upon the ground for a moment; it was only for a moment, for in my uneasiness I could not remain motionless. I tried to reflect, to reason; but so fast did thoughts of starvation and of Indian perils crowd on my mind, that I could come to no definite conclusion as to my present position with reference to that of my companions. I tried to follow my own trail back to the point where I had so foolishly left "Old Paint," but the ground was so hard that my horse's hoofs had made little or no indentation, and I was too impatient to examine the face of the prairie with that searching scrutiny which might have resulted in success.

Yet I resolved to make one desperate effort, at least, to



find the command. I knew enough of my situation to feel convinced that by circling about, from prairie roll to prairie roll, I might gallop my horse for hours and at last find myself at the point I started from, "with confusion worse confounded;"—travelling in a straight line alone might save me. Here was another difficulty; for the course I might adopt, even were I successful in keeping it, might leave me at a still greater distance from my friends. How I wished for the presence of Tom Hancock—the presence even of the greatest dullard in the command would have assisted in removing the mountain of torturing uncertainty that pressed upon my mind. Man never knows the full weight of *hopelessness* until he is made to bear it alone, with no human intelligence near from whose resources he can hope to draw something for his relief when he is too consciously aware that his own are exhausted. Even sympathy imparts something of hope. I felt that even my horse was some company to me: I patted him kindly on the neck and told him so aloud.

"But," the reader will perchance inquire, "why did you not give your horse the reins and trust to his natural instinct for regaining his and your companions?" And again, "Why did you not wait until the sun was low in the western heavens, then reflect, for one moment, in what direction the command was travelling and the side on which you had left it? You knew that the sun would set in the west, and that as you faced it, north was to the right and south to the left—surely you could then steer a course, even if you could not while the sun was vertical."

Gentle reader, you have never been lost on a wide ocean of prairies, unskilled in border life, and little gifted with the power of first adopting a course to follow, and then not deviating from it. You must recollect that there, as on the wide ocean, you find no trees, no friendly landmarks, to guide you—all is a wide waste of eternal sameness. *To be lost*, as I and others have experienced, has a complex and fearful meaning. It is not merely to stray from your friends, your path, but from yourself. With your way, you lose your presence of mind. You attempt to reason, but the rudder and compass of your reflective faculties are gone. Self-confidence, too, is lost—in a word all is lost, except a maniacal impulse to despair, that is peculiar and inde-scribable.



In my case fate, fortune, good luck—call it by what name you may—stepped in to my assistance. While upon one of the highest rolls of the prairie I resolved to proceed in a certain direction, and, if possible, to keep it without variation. Whether I did so or not I am unable to say—I only know that after travelling at a rapid pace, it may be some five miles, I suddenly found myself upon the brow of a high and steep declivity, overlooking a narrow but beautiful valley, through which a small creek was winding. I had examined the prairies in every direction, during my short ride, until my eyes ached from over-straining, yet had not for a moment allowed my horse to slacken his pace. I now paused to examine the valley before me. The reader may judge my feelings when, after a hasty glance, I discovered the white tops of the wagons, far off in the distance to the right, slowly winding their way down a gentle slope into the valley. Never was the sight of friendly sail more welcome to the eye of a shipwrecked mariner than was the appearance of those wagons to me, and I fairly laughed aloud at my good fortune.

Immediately in front of the spot where I had made this truly fortunate discovery, the declivity was steep, amounting almost to a precipice, with craggy rocks jutting out in every direction. A few steps beyond, the descent, although rough, appeared less steep, and in such haste was I once more to reach the command, that I put spurs to my horse and dashed headlong down. Scarcely had I proceeded twenty steps ere my horse snorted and jumped furiously aside, frightened by a rattlesnake lying almost directly in the path. Blind at the time in all probability, it being in August, the snake did not give the well-known and frightful alarm until the feet of my horse were close upon him. Numbers of these poisonous reptiles, coiled among the rocks immediately around, soon joined in the alarm, and at the same time emitted an odour which was disagreeable in the extreme.\* If I had been frightened while lost upon the prairies, it was now my horse's turn to share a panic with me. With quick, yet tremulous

\* Every animal, with the single exception of the hog, has an instinctive fear of the rattlesnake, can scent them easily, and will fly at their approach with terror. The hog cares nothing for the reptiles, but on the contrary has been known to attack, kill, and devour them with avidity and impunity.



leaps, he dashed down the craggy steep, and I was unable to restrain or check him until he had reached the smooth grassy bottom in safety. How many snakes there were in this immediate neighbourhood is more than I can tell—I did not stop to count or calculate; but if the lot had been purchased at five hundred, I honestly think the buyer never would have had reason to find fault with the reckoning. On looking back, I discovered a large hole or cave among the rocks, and near the path I had taken, which I had not seen before. This was probably the den or dwelling-place of the reptiles, and at the time when I passed along they were all out airing themselves in the sun. Half an hour's brisk trot brought me up with the command, which I found my companion had already rejoined. He did not know even that I had been lost until I informed him of my adventure. I said little about it, but inly resolved never to be caught out of sight of the command again.

Two or three rattlesnakes had been killed that night within our lines, stragglers, probably, from the den I had passed, and belated, or else too blind to find their way back. After falling asleep at night, my dreams partook of anything but the agreeable. At one time I thought myself, like Mazeppa, beset on every side by ravenous wolves, grinning and snapping at me at every step. Next, I was suffering horribly from both hunger and thirst—my powder had all become spoiled by rain, and the clouds gave down no other than bitter water. Soon I was chased by a gang of bloodthirsty Indians, and to increase my fright, my faithful horse suddenly lost half his speed. Anon, the prairie was covered in every direction with rattlesnakes, and at the next moment it was on fire, myself standing on a small unburned knoll, the flames rapidly approaching me in every direction. From these dreams I would awake with a start, the horrors of the night even exceeding those of the day which had preceded it. Right glad was I when morning at length came to dissipate the annoying dreams.

After proceeding a short distance on our journey that morning, we encountered even a worse road than any over which we had travelled, if my memory serve me. We boxed the compass for several hours, going some ten or twelve miles to gain three on our course, but were finally fortunate enough to reach a high piece of table land where



the *mesquit*\* grass was fresh, and far better than any we had previously found. To this spot Carlos said the Mexicans frequently brought their sheep, on account of the superiority of the pasturage; and he also pointed in the direction of a large spring and creek of fresh water, which he said emptied into the Red River a few miles to the north. Although no sign could be seen indicating water in the direction he pointed out, his assertion proved correct; for after a travel of five or six miles a spring was found in the precise situation which he had described. More singular than this, he had frequently informed the men where plum patches were to be found in the vicinity of our journey, and he was almost invariably correct. With all these corroborating circumstances it cannot be wondered at that we all thought we were within a few days' march of the frontier Mexican settlements.

On encamping at night, fully convinced as the commissioners were of the truth of the statements made by Carlos, who said that San Miguel was not more than seventy-five or eighty miles distant, they determined upon sending Messrs. Howland, Baker, and Rosenberry forward to procure sugar, coffee, and breadstuffs, and consult with the inhabitants, more particularly with some of the principal men, as to the reception the expedition would probably meet. Howland had lived several years in Santa Fé and the vicinity, spoke Spanish fluently, and was well acquainted with all the leading inhabitants. He was a man of great intelligence, brave, and at the same time cautious.

\* Whether this is a Mexican or Indian name for a particular kind of grass, found in great abundance on the great prairies of the West, I am unable to say. Cattle and horses are extremely fond of it, and it is very nourishing. There is a small, brambly bush of the same name, and also a tree about the size of a cherry or peach tree. The latter bears a pod containing beans, which are greedily devoured by horses and cattle, and are said to fatten them as well as grain. The Camanches make a species of meal from the beans, very palatable and nutritious, and the Mexicans also use them in making beer as well as sugar. When our provisions and coffee fell short, the men ate them raw in immense quantities, and also either roasted or boiled them. The wood makes the best of charcoal, throws out a great heat, and lasts a long time. The tree, as well as the small bush, has a long, sharp thorn. I have spelled the word *mesquit*, believing that to be the Spanish mode—it is pronounced *mesheet*. West of San Antonio there are immense groves of mesquit trees, and the grass is also found there in several varieties.



The party took with them but three days' provisions, and as large numbers of hostile Indians were known to infest the borders of New Mexico, they were to travel only by night, lying concealed during the day.

Had it not been for this circumstance alone, I should most certainly have accompanied this party; but I had a pack mule with no inconsiderable wardrobe to take along, and to travel through an Indian country with such an encumbrance was deemed not only unsafe but impracticable. So anxious was I to hasten my journey that I was almost tempted to leave my mule, and take such articles only as I could carry on my horse; but my friends so strongly advised me to continue with the command, that I relinquished the idea of accompanying them, much against my wishes. After circumstances proved, almost beyond a doubt, that the fact of my being compelled to remain with the command saved my life.\* I was particularly anxious to hasten forward on more than one account. In the first place, the season was becoming far advanced, and I was in no little anxiety to prosecute my journey through the interior of Mexico, so as to reach the United States by the early part of winter; in the next place, I had passed about time enough, I will not say lived, on weak coffee without sugar, and a rather short allowance of beef, anything but good; and I was extremely solicitous to change my diet. To sum up all, "*I had seen the elephant.*"

The whole of August 11th we remained in camp, partly to repair some of the wagons, but principally to rest the oxen, many of their feet having been worn to the quick by the rough and stony roads. In the evening Howland and his unfortunate friends left for the settlements, and were never seen again save by four of us. On the ensuing morning we made an early start, under the guidance of Carlos, who now was stationed with the advance guard, as the spy company had been broken up. The day was extremely hot and sultry; yet our guide found a smooth and level prairie, and we were enabled to make some twelve miles in a north-west course before the middle of the

\* Afterwards, I saw Howland and Baker shot, like dogs, in the plaza at San Miguel. Rosenberry was also killed, although I was not present at his death. My fate would, in all human probability, have been the same had I accompanied them.



afternoon. The advance guard had by this time arrived at the brow of a small hill, overlooking a cool and shady dell, when a fine buffalo cow was seen lying under a large mesquit tree, and apparently fast asleep.

One of our party immediately dismounted with the intention of creeping up within gunshot of the animal, while two of us disencumbered our horses of saddle-bags and all superfluous articles, handed our rifles to some of the men, with a request that they would take charge of them and then closely examined our pistols to see that they were in order. My comrade's name was Torry, and we felt determined on giving the buffalo a hard chase should the first hunter not succeed in killing her.

He was successful in creeping within sixty yards of the unconscious animal, but unfortunately his rifle hung fire, throwing the ball wide of the mark. The buffalo rose at the report, and turned her head until her eye caught a glance of us, when she immediately set off in a westerly direction and at a lumbering gallop. Myself and companion were instantly in pursuit at a brisk canter, not intending to push our horses to the utmost until we were close upon our prey. After climbing the acclivity on the opposite side from where the buffalo was first seen lying, we had a level plain before us, miles in extent, and presenting no other obstacles to a fair race than an occasional patch of small and tangled mesquit bushes. As we were some little distance from the hunter when he fired, the buffalo had a good half mile the start of us; yet before we had been two miles in chase, we were within fifty yards of her. With full confidence that we should soon be alongside, we now spurred our horses to their utmost speed. At almost every stride a deer would start in affright from his covert under the larger mesquit trees,\* and with a few jumps place himself out of harm's way. Never have I seen the deer so plentiful as they were during that exciting chase, and so close did we come to them before they started that we could easily have shot them with our pistols.

We were almost up to the buffalo as we neared a large patch of the smaller mesquits, and had already cocked our

\* It should be understood that the larger class of these trees, and the only ones which afford a shade on the prairies, never grow close together, but are generally found fifteen or twenty feet apart. At a short distance, a grove of them resembles a peach orchard.



pistols, when the affrighted animal dashed directly into the thickest part of the matted thicket. Many of the bushes were dry, yet breaking and crashing through, she rushed madly on, utterly regardless of the long and sharp thorns with which they were covered. Not so with our horses; their chests and shoulders were not shielded by the long, shaggy hair found upon the buffalo, and as the thorns entered their flesh, they shied, bolted, and ran so unkindly that we could hardly spur them through. This gave the cow every advantage, and enabled her to gain some fifty yards while going twice that distance; but on emerging from the thicket the race was our own again. Once more we were nearly up with the flank of the huge and unwieldy animal, and about to discharge our pistols, when another tangled thicket intervened to cut us off. A third and a fourth time we were nearly up with our prey, and considered her in our very hands; but just in the very nick of time another tangled patch would present itself as a shelter and protection to the hunted beast. In this way the race continued some five or six miles, and until our nags gave manifest symptoms of distress. Had the prairie been smooth and clear of thickets, we should have at least discharged every pistol we had, and in all probability brought our noble game to the ground; as it was, with jaded animals and every prospect of farther obstacles a-head, we reined in and gave up the chase—reluctantly enough on my part.

We immediately dismounted from our horses to give them an opportunity of recovering their wind and resting, and in the mean time watched the still retreating animal we had vainly endeavoured to kill. She never appeared to check her heavy, lumbering gallop until lost to view on the distant prairie. The ridge upon which the chase had taken place ran nearly east and west; on the side along which the buffalo led us, there appearing to be a slight gradual slope towards the south. In that direction, and running parallel with the ridge, we could see the dim outline of what appeared to be a heavy belt of timber—the bottoms, as we then thought, of a large river. Having noted well the points from which this timber could be seen, we once more mounted our horses, and slowly retraced our steps. The deer, which, as we sped along after the buffalo, had jumped almost from under the very feet of our horses, were now



nowhere to be seen—gone with our hopes of a meal of the fat cow, and affording another specimen of the luck of hungry hunters.

We found the command encamped near the spot where we had first seen the buffalo, although there was barely water enough for the men, and our animals stood in the utmost need. We mentioned the circumstance of our having seen a long line of timber to the southward, with every appearance of a large stream in that direction; but Carlos said that such could not be the case, and he spoke with a confidence that gained belief even over the testimony of our senses. He admitted, however, that there might be a creek or a small stream, but thought it could not run in a parallel course with the river north of us, the bottoms of which we could see on every day's march. Here, for the time, the matter of a southern watercourse rested.

With the result of our buffalo hunt I was far from satisfied. I had fully made up my mind to have a meal of wild meat that night; and now that visions of the cow, with her delicious marrow-bones, had faded, my mind was led to investigate the chances of obtaining at least a fat buck for our mess. We had seen enough during our hard chase to convince us that they were not only exceedingly numerous, but very tame. The main body of those we had frightened from their noon-day rest as we galloped along, had gone in the direction of a beautiful valley scarcely a mile from our camp. Confident that I could find some of these feeding in this valley, I shouldered my rifle and hobbled off, as well as my lame ankle would allow me, in that direction.

The sun was just setting as I crossed a little roll which overlooked this retreat. So far from being disappointed in my expectations of finding deer in this quiet dell, I was agreeably surprised on seeing a large drove of them feeding upon the short, sweet grass. They saw me, too, for they lifted their heads on high, gave the well-known whistle, and stared with their mild, large eyes directly towards the spot where I was standing; but instead of leaping hurriedly away, as is their wont when worried and hunted by either whites or Indians, they soon bent their heads to the ground again, and unconcernedly resumed their evening meal.

I could have shot the nearest, from the spot where I first



discovered them, and without, to borrow one of the comedian Hackett's expressions, running any great risk of straining my rifle; but they were so exceedingly tame that I thought I would creep directly into their very midst, where I could have my choice of the largest and fattest buck. It seemed hardly necessary, so little did the naturally timid animals regard my approach, to seek the cover afforded by some scattered mesquit trees; yet I made use of them, and in five minutes was in a position where I could make my selection from among at least fifty, and the farthest was not seventy yards from me. I soon selected a victim, a noble buck whose plumpness and lightish blue colour betokened an exceeding degree of fatness. Sitting upon the ground, I raised my rifle across my knee as a half rest, took a sight which I thought close and deliberate, and "blazed away." The light blue smoke curled slowly upward in fleecy wreaths upon the still evening air, and as it partially dispersed I saw my deer staring me full in the face, somewhat astonished, perhaps, but far more frightened at the report of my rifle. He hoisted his tail, made five or six bounds, and then stopped to give another inquiring look in the direction where I was sitting. Supposing, of course, that I had given him a mortal wound, I quietly began to reload my rifle with the intention of sacrificing another buck, for not one of the gang had moved ten steps; but what was my astonishment, after having driven well home a bullet and put on a percussion cap, to see the buck I had shot at absolutely nipping the grass with as good a relish as any of the herd. I *knew* that I had hit him—I could not, by any possibility, miss him at so short a distance; but there he stood, a living witness that if I had hit I had at least not hurt him much.

I could easily, from the spot where I was sitting, have selected a victim for my second shot much nearer than was my first love by this time; but having certain misgivings that he *might* not have received a mortal wound, I determined upon paying my respects to him a second time—it was my duty to "put him out of his misery" as quickly as possible. With these intentions I again rested my rifle across my knee, again pulled the trigger, again the rifle went off with a good, sharp, and as I thought killing crack, and again the deer went off, too, some half a dozen jumps across the prairie. If I thought I had given a mortal



wound the first time, I was *sure* of it now—it could not be otherwise—there was no such thing as missing a vital part twice, at a distance which was absolutely short enough for putting out a squirrel's eye without spoiling his skin.

But to be ready for another, I again commenced reloading. Once or twice, while handling the powder and lead, I cast a glance at the buck to which I had already dedicated two shots, every moment expecting to see him totter—to see his legs give way—yet there he stood, as firm on his pins as ever, and what was stranger than all, again commenced a supper from which he had been twice interrupted. Still, there was no necessity of wasting more lead upon him—he could not get away—and I therefore commenced a survey of the herd for the next biggest. There was no difficulty in making a choice, for by the time my rifle was ready for a third discharge another large buck had fed along until he was within forty steps of me. I waited until he presented a fair broadside, and then fired. The result was precisely the same as on the first two discharges—the buck I had last shot at jumped off as did the first; his bounds may have been a trifle longer, and there may have been a few more of them. That he was a dead or dying deer there was no question.

Once more I commenced loading my rifle. Some of the deer, in my more immediate vicinity, had, after the three shots, placed a few yards more of ground between us; but others had taken their places, and I was still within half rifle-shot of at least twenty of them. By the time I had reloaded, and was ready to renew the destruction I had commenced, the dark shades of evening had fallen upon the more distant prairie swells, yet it was still light enough for me to see distinctly every object in my neighbourhood. Deeply did I regret the lateness of the hour, as with a little more light I was sanguine in the belief that I could strew the prairie with trophies of my skill as a hunter. Often, while in the settlements, had I remained patiently at a stand, hour after hour, watching for a pack of hounds to drive some affrighted deer within gunshot, and had even considered myself in some way rewarded if, during a long day's hunt, I had a glimpse of a buck dashing madly through the bushes at a distance of three or four hundred yards, and had heard the exciting bay of the hounds while



in hot pursuit. If, by any chance—and such accidents had happened two or three times in my life—I was fortunate enough to bring down a deer, the exploit would furnish me with food for thought and speech for a twelvemonth—now, look in what direction I would, the animals were staring me in the face within a stone's throw, and seemed coaxingly to ask me to shoot at them: surely, never before were deer seen so tame.

Anxious to make the most of my time before it was yet too dark, I drew up my rifle a fourth time and discharged it at still another buck. He followed in the footsteps of his shot-at predecessors, evincing astonishment or alarm no otherwise than by bounding off a few jumps and then stopping to gaze at me. Of the two I was probably the most astonished—astonished that he did not fall instantly to the ground.

What was the matter? It might be that my rifle, “sighted” for a distance of one hundred and twenty-five yards, carried too high at forty or fifty. But then, if I did not shoot them directly through the heart, the ball could not have passed far above it—the animals must be badly, if not mortally wounded.

After having poured a charge of powder into my rifle, I found that I had but a single ball left—for not anticipating such luck, I had started with only five. The confidence I at first felt, that the deer I had shot at must soon fall, was now sensibly diminishing, although lingering hopes were still harboured in my mind that the more tender portions of some one of them, at least, would furnish the raw material for my supper. I had finished loading, and on looking over the little valley I noticed that the deer, with the daylight, had become scarce. There was one buck, however, close by me—not sixty yards distant. Determined to make sure of this one, if the others were really unhurt, I crept up until I verily believe he was not thirty steps from me. The motion of placing my rifle across my knee, for I made each shot sitting upon the ground, attracted the animal's attention so much that he absolutely advanced several steps towards me. He fairly seemed bent upon his own destruction—to meet me half way in my desire to make my last shot certain.

The dimness of night by this time rendered it impossible to “draw a fine bead,” in hunter's parlance; but then at a



distance at which I could have killed him with a brickbat, what was the necessity of being too particular about my aim? I fired.

The buck did not bound off as the others had done, but, on the contrary, advanced towards me with looks of inquiry! I knew that the severest and most mortal wounds are frequently unattended with pain or a sense of injury—I must have given the buck one of this description. I jumped from the ground and hobbled towards him as fast as my lameness would permit. He turned and scampered off after his comrades. By a fair mathematical calculation the animal went at least twenty yards while I went one; yet I continued the pursuit with the hope that his race would soon be run. Until his broad, white tail was lost in the dim twilight of evening did I press forward, and only gave up the chase when I could see nothing to pursue.

Thus ends a long but veritable account of an adventure with a herd of deer on the Western prairies. To account for their exceeding tameness and approachability, I can offer no other solution than that they had never before met either the white or red man. The narrow space of country which afforded them food was bounded by sterile wastes, and their natural enemies, the red men, had never visited their peaceful dell.

I slowly picked my way back to camp, out of humour and out of conceit with myself, my rifle, my powder, and more especially my bullets. On reaching my comrades, I ascertained that Tom Hancock had shot three noble bucks, and had gone out some time after me. Nothing, he said, save the want of light, had prevented him from killing twenty. I was asked if I had seen any deer. I merely remarked that I had seen several, and here the conversation dropped. I was not disposed to be communicative.

And what, the reader will probably ask, was the reason of my want of success? In all frankness, and with a desire to answer his question fairly, and to the best of my knowledge, belief, and ability, I will here state that there is a very common disease prevalent among young and inexperienced hunters in Texas, which is known as the "*buck ague*." It manifests itself whenever the subject is suddenly brought in close proximity with game of the larger class, and more difficult to kill, and its effects, are to give a hurriedness of action, a tremulousness of the nerves, and an unwonted



excitableness to the feelings generally. It strikes me forcibly, and I have little doubt the reader's impressions are closely akin to mine, that I underwent a severe attack of the "buck ague" while on the little hunting excursion of which I have given a description—in plain English, that I was too nervous even to hit a barn door at twenty steps.



## CHAPTER IX.

**Carlos and his Speculations.—Startling Surmises.—Singular Valley —Fire in Camp.—Night Ascent of the Bluffs.—Ravages of the Fire.—Magnificent night Scene.—Again on the March.—Intolerable Suffering from Thirst.—Disappearance of Carlos and Brignoli.—Horror of our Situation.—Lost, and without a Guide upon the Prairies.—Party sent out to Explore.—Company of Spies sent out. Bitter Water.—Sufferings now commencing.—Prairie Dogs.**

THE 13th of August was an eventful day with us—one which few of the party can ever forget. The night previous we encamped without water for our cattle or horses, and the little we obtained for our own use was of the first quality, and swallowed only to allay the intolerable thirst brought on by a long day's march under the hot sun. The hard buffalo chase had jaded my horse severely, and at such a time I well knew he needed water more than ever; but not a drop could I procure for him.

We had proceeded but a short distance, on the morning of the 13th, before the blue tops of several mountains were seen, far in the distance to the west. Carlos was the first to discover them, and remarked that they were *Los Cuervos*, or *The Crows*, three high mountains in the chain through which the supposed Red River has cut its way. The place where the stream winds its course through the mountains is called *Angosturas* or Narrows, and the Crows stand out in bold relief to guide the distant traveller to that point.

Our route, at the present time, was along a high prairie which appeared to be a dividing ridge between two large streams. During the morning, Captain Caldwell visited the stream which my companion and I had discovered the day previous, while chasing the buffalo. On returning, about noon, he said that the stream was a large one, and that he believed it to be the Brazos! This river was supposed by all to be a long distance to the south. Captain C. also, for the first time, declared his conviction that the stream we



had been following up from the Waco village was the *Wichita* and that the Red River was some seventy-five or a hundred miles to the north. All were startled at this report; but still, so strong was the reliance placed in the assertions of Carlos, few could be induced to give it credit.

We continued our journey until the middle of the afternoon, altering our course somewhat to the north to avoid the bad travelling we found more immediately on our route. Small parties of men were out in every direction in search of water, but they met with no success. By this time the want of the reviving element was plainly seen in our horses; their wild and glaring eyes, with their broken, nervous, and unsteady action, shewing the intensity of their suffering. The mules, too, suffered much from the want of water, but nothing in comparison with the horses and oxen. The endurance of the mule is never so well tested as on a journey where both water and grass are scarce.

I have said that we continued our journey until the middle of the afternoon. About that time, and without seeing any sign ahead that could lead us to expect there was so great a change in the face of the country, we suddenly reached the brow of a precipitous bluff, some two or three hundred feet in height, which overlooked a large valley of broken and rugged appearance. This valley was four or five miles in width, a ridge of rough hills bounding it on the northern side, and not only the descent to the valley from the bluff on which we stood, but the whole surface below, was covered by dry cedars, apparently killed the previous year by fire. The spot upon which we stood was a level plain, covered with rank and coarse grass several feet in height. This grass, no rain having fallen for weeks, had become as dry as tinder. While consulting as to what course we should pursue, some one of our party discovered water at a distance of three or four miles across the valley below, a turn in the river bringing it to view. We immediately determined, if possible, to effect the descent of the steep and ragged bluff before us, and at least give our suffering animals a chance to quench their thirst, even if the water should prove too brackish for our own use.

Some thirty-five or forty of the advance guard instantly determined upon undertaking the toilsome and dangerous descent, and, to give my horse the earliest turn at the water, I accompanied this party. After winding and picking our



way for a full hour, pitching down precipices that were nearly perpendicular, and narrowly escaping frightful chasms and fissures of the rocks, we were all enabled to reach the valley with whole bones; but to do this we were frequently obliged to dismount from our horses, and in some places fairly to push them over abrupt descents which they never would have attempted without force. I have said that this bluff was some two or three hundred feet in height—we travelled at least a mile to gain this short distance, so devious and difficult was our path. The side of the bluff was formed of rough, sharp-pointed rocks, many of them of large size, and every little spot of earth had, in former years, given nourishment and support to some scraggy cedar, now left leafless and desolate by fire. Shoots of young cedars, however, were springing up wherever they could find root-hold; but they were not destined to attain the rank and standing of their sires.

After reaching the valley, we soon found the sandy bed of what had been a running stream in the rainy season. Immediately on striking it, our tired nags raised their heads, pricked up their ears, and set off at a brisk trot, instinctively knowing that water was in the vicinity. The horse scents water at an incredible distance, and frequently travellers upon the prairies are enabled to find it by simply turning their horses or mules loose.

A tiresome ride of three or four miles now brought us to the river. On reaching its banks, nothing could restrain our nags from dashing headlong down. Equally thirsty ourselves, we had fondly hoped that the waters might prove fresh and sweet; but they were even more brackish than any we had yet tasted. Repulsive as it was, however, we swallowed enough to moisten our parched lips and throats, and ten minutes after were even more thirsty than before. Our horses, more fond of this water than any other, drank until apparently they could swallow no more.

While some of our party were digging into the sand at the edge of the stream, with the hope of finding water more fresh, and others were enjoying the cooling luxury of a bath, a loud report, as of a cannon, was heard in the direction of the camp, and a dark smoke was seen suddenly to arise.

“An Indian attack!” was the startling cry on all sides, and instantly we commenced huddling on our clothes and bridling our horses. One by one, as fast as we could get



ready, we set off for what we supposed to be a scene of conflict. As we neared the camping-ground it became plainly evident that the prairie was on fire in all directions. When within a mile of the steep bluff, which cut off the prairie above from the valley, the bright flames were seen flashing among the dry cedars, and a dense volume of black smoke, rising above all, gave a painful sublimity to the scene.

On approaching nearer we were met by some of our companions, who were hurriedly seeking a passage up the steep. They had heard, from those on the prairie above, that the high grass had caught fire by accident, and that with such velocity had it spread that several of the wagons, and among them that of the commissioners, had been consumed. This wagon contained, in addition to a large number of cartridges, all the trunks and valuables of the mess to which I was attached, making me doubly anxious to gain the scene of destruction and learn the worst. It afterward proved that the explosion of the cartridges in the wagon was what we had mistaken for the report of our six-pounder.

With redoubled exertions we now pushed forward towards the camp, but before we could reach the base of the high and rugged bluff the flames were dashing down its sides with frightful rapidity, leaping and flashing across the gullies and around the hideous cliffs, and roaring in the deep, yawning chasms with the wild and appalling noise of a tornado. As the flames would strike the dry tops of the cedars, reports, resembling those of the musket, would be heard; and in such quick succession did these reports follow each other, that I can compare them to nothing save the irregular discharge of infantry—a strange accompaniment to the wild roar of the devouring element.

The wind was blowing fresh from the west when the prairie was first ignited, carrying the flames, with a speed absolutely astounding, over the very ground on which we had travelled during the day. The wind lulled as the sun went down behind the mountains in the west, and now the fire began to spread slowly in that direction. The difficult passage by which we had descended was cut off by the fire and night found our party still in the valley, unable to discover any other road to the table-land above. Our situation was a dangerous one, too; for had the wind sprung up and veered into the east, we should have found much difficulty in escaping, with such velocity did the flames extend.



If the scene had been grand previous to the going down of the sun, its magnificence was increased tenfold as night in vain attempted to throw its dark mantle over the earth. The light from acres and acres, I might say miles and miles, of inflammable and blazing cedars, illuminated earth and sky with a radiance even more lustrous and dazzling than that of the noonday sun. Ever and anon, as some one of our comrades would approach the brow of the high bluff above us, he appeared not like an inhabitant of this earth. A lurid and most unnatural glow, reflected upon his countenance from the valley of burning cedars, seemed to render still more haggard and toilsome his burned and blackened features.

I was fortunate enough, about nine o'clock, to meet one of our men, who directed me to a passage up the steep ascent. He had just left the bluff above, and gave me a piteous recital of our situation. He was endeavouring to find water, after several hours of unceasing toil, and I left him with slight hopes that his search would be rewarded. By this time I was alone, not one of my companions who had started with me from the river being in sight or hearing. One by one they had dropped off, each searching for some path by which he might climb to the table-land above.

The first person I met, after reaching the prairie, was Mr. Falconer, standing with the blackened remnant of a blanket in his hand, and watching lest the fire should break out on the western side of the camp; for in that direction the exertions of the men, aided by a strong westerly wind, had prevented the devouring element from spreading. Mr. F. directed me to the spot where our mess was quartered. I found them sitting upon such articles as had been saved from the wagon, their gloomy countenances rendered more desponding by the reflection from the now distant fire. I was too much worn down by fatigue and deep anxiety to make many inquiries as to the extent of our loss; but hungry, and almost choked with thirst, I threw myself upon the blackened ground and sought forgetfulness in sleep. It was hours, however, before sleep visited my eyelids. From the spot on which I was lying, a broad sheet of flame could still be seen, miles and miles in width, the heavens in that direction so brilliantly lit up that they resembled a sea of molten gold. In the west, a wall of impenetrable blackness appeared to be thrown up as the spectator suddenly turned



from viewing the conflagration in the opposite direction. The subdued yet deep roar of the element could still be plainly heard as it sped on as with the wings of lightning across the prairies, while in the valley far below, the flames were flashing and leaping among the dry cedars, and shooting and circling about in manner closely resembling a magnificent pyrotechnic display;—the general combination forming a scene of grandeur and sublimity which the pen shrinks from describing, and to which the power of words is wholly unequal.

Daylight the next morning disclosed a melancholy scene of desolation and destruction. North, south, and east as far as the eye could reach, the rough and broken country was blackened by the fire, and the removal of the earth's shaggy covering of cedars and tall grass laid bare, in painful distinctness, the awful chasms and rents in the steep hillside before us, as well as the valley spreading far and wide below. Afar off, in the distance, a dense black smoke was seen rising, denoting that the course of the devastating element was still onward. Two of our wagons only had been entirely consumed, but nearly all had suffered. A part of the baggage in the commissioners' wagon had been saved by the extraordinary exertions of some of the men, and just as they had relinquished the work, the explosion of cartridges, which had first alarmed the party in the valley, scattered the burning fragments of the wagon in every direction. My friend Falconer was so disfigured that I hardly knew him. His hair and eyebrows were scorched completely off, his face was in a perfect blister, his clothes burned from his back, and, without a hat, he seemed as though some insurance office had met with a heavy loss. Object of pity, however, as he appeared to be, I still could not help smiling at the sad and woe-be-gone figure he presented. Among the few trunks saved, I fortunately found mine, containing nearly all my money, clothing, watch, and other valuables. The loss of a carpet-bag, which contained my boots and the rough articles I wore upon the road, was all I had to regret in the way of private property. Not so with the mess to which I was attached. The remnant of coffee we still had left was *burned* entirely too much; our pots, pans and kettles, knives and forks, were converted into old iron—everything was gone. We had nothing to eat, however, except half rations of miserably poor beef, and the



necessity of falling back upon first principles, or, in other words, eating with our fingers, annoyed us but little.

The wagon of the commissioners contained, besides our private baggage, a quantity of jewellery, blankets, cartridges, rifles, muskets, &c. These were all destroyed. The other wagon which was consumed was loaded with goods, and from this nothing was saved. At one time the ammunition wagon, containing a large quantity of powder, was on fire, and only saved by the daring exertions of some of our men. It may appear singular to some of my readers that so much damage could be caused by the burning of grass alone, for on the spot where the wagons were drawn up there was nothing else; but it should be remembered that this grass was very high, had been killed by dry weather, and flashed up and spread almost with the rapidity of a train of powder on being ignited. It is very easy, when a fire upon the prairies is seen coming towards a party, to escape its dangers by kindling the grass immediately about and taking possession of the newly-burned ground before the distant flames come up; but in this instance the fire commenced on the windward side, and with a frightful rapidity flashed directly along our line of wagons. The only wonder at the time was, how anything had been saved from the furious element that roared and crackled around.

We packed up and arranged our baggage as well as we could, hunted up and drove in our cattle, and late in the forenoon made a start. Our course was nearly west, and along the level prairie that overlooked the large valley upon our right. The mountains that we had seen the day previous, gradually opened to the view; and as they became more visible, did not so well answer the description Carlos had given of *The Crows*. But few, however, felt disposed to doubt the man's words. We are slow in giving credence to any story, however plausible, that runs counter to our desires and hopes.

Our road was a good one this day, and we journeyed on with unusual rapidity. The men suffered incredibly from thirst, and were constantly seen eating the pods from the mesquit-trees, drawing the little moisture they possessed to relieve their parched tongues and throats. A bullet has considerable virtue in relieving thirst, and a piece of raw hide imparts much moisture to the mouth, as I have proved by sad experience.



At night we encamped in a beautiful dell, covered with the larger mesquit-trees and excellent grass. This encampment appeared to be near the termination of the valley of cedars, and the face of the country onward was now entirely changed, being broken and mountainous. The only water we could find in the vicinity of this camp, which would otherwise have been one of the finest on our route, was entirely too brackish for use. The cattle and horses were fond of it; the men, however, could not swallow it without great nausea, and it did not in the least quench their thirst. That evening, Carlos left camp in company with an Italian named Brignoli, as they said, in search of water and the best route for our wagons on the ensuing day. Late at night they returned, Brignoli showing some specimens of quicksilver he had found, which were said to be very rich by those who pretended to any knowledge on the subject. He had joined the expedition as a volunteer, but was known to be constantly in search of precious minerals.

In the mean time, every one in camp who spoke Spanish was questioning Carlos as to our position and prospects. Those who doubted his knowledge, or mistrusted his faith, did not hesitate to declare their misgivings aloud. No threats were offered, but Carlos understood just enough of English to know that they were talking of him, and not saying anything complimentary either to his knowledge of the country or his honesty. The next morning early he was missing, and, on looking about the camp, Brignoli, too, was found absent. This circumstance created the greatest excitement among all; yet Carlos had many believers and friends—and they still insisted that he had only left the camp for a short time, to hunt. The oxen were yoked and hitched to the wagons, and every preparation made for resuming our journey, but Carlos was yet missing.

It is impossible, either to be placed or imagined, in a worse and more pitiable situation than the one in which we now found ourselves. The hope that we were within some sixty miles of the frontier settlements vanished with Carlos, for we knew that he would not have left, so long as there was a probability of his leading us safely through the difficulties in which we were involved. He had been offered inducements too strong for him thus to desert us, unless he himself was lost, and feared the consequences of leading us farther astray. We were suffering, too, from the want of fresh



water, and knew full well that there was none on the road we had come, short of three days' march over a prairie rendered desolate by the great fire. Our only hope was in going ahead, and when nine o'clock came, we pushed on without rudder or compass, the melancholy truth plainly visible in almost every face, that we were lost among the wilderness prairies of the West.

As we pursued our melancholy journey, there were still a few among us who thought that Carlos would come up and honestly account for his absence. They even declared their belief that we had now arrived within sight of the Angosturas, or Narrows of Red River, and that if Carlos had really left us, it was because he feared that some of the leading men in New Mexico, inimical to the Texans, might blame him for guiding us directly to their homesteads. About noon we were fortunate enough to find a cool and delicious spring of fresh water, and near it a pond large enough to water all our horses and cattle. After drinking deeply at the fountain-head, and fervently hoping for a continuance of such good fortune, we filled our gourds and canteens, and resumed our march. Whenever we looked back, we could see an immense smoke in the east, plainly denoting that the prairie fire which had broken out two days previous was still raging. Early in the afternoon, a heavy black cloud was noticed directly over the spot, from which rain was descending apparently in torrents; beyond, and in fact, all around this cloud, the sky was clear and without a speck. Here was a shower got up on the Espy principle, although at a heavy cost to our party.

Our course was now nearly west. On our left, and running in nearly a northwest and southeast direction, a range of mountains was plainly visible—the chain which, it was now evident enough, Carlos had mistaken for *The Crows*. I say mistaken, for up to the morning of his departure I believe the fellow's intentions were honest, and that he really supposed the party to be on the Red River. The water in the Wichita, for that the river we were on undoubtedly was, resembled in every way that of the former, while the country around bore the same appearance; and as Carlos had trapped on both streams, probably without noticing either carefully, and knew but little of them even as low down as Coffee's Station, and was unacquainted with the American name of the river, the mistake might easily occur.



I have mentioned the appearance of the country to the left; on our right it was much broken, and evidently impassable for wagons. A party of some thirty of us, all well mounted, left the command to explore thoroughly this latter section, and our leader, Captain Caldwell, declared that he would not return until he had satisfactorily ascertained whether we were in the neighbourhood of the Narrows or not. Captain C. was the first man to suggest that the stream up which we had been so long journeying was not the Red River, and also to express doubts whether Carlos really knew as much of the country as he pretended.

After working our way through a succession of rugged hills, cedar-brakes, and ravines, for a distance of some ten miles, we at length reached the stream upon our right. It had dwindled down to a small brook, and the head spring was evidently somewhere in the mountains in our vicinity.\* The water was extremely salt, and unfit for use. Several trails were found leading along the banks, made by Indians and mustangs, and in one place mule and horse tracks were seen, together with the print of a white man's shoe in the sand, evidently made either by Carlos or his companion, or by one of Howland's men. Being satisfied that we were not in the neighbourhood of the Narrows, and that it was impossible to take the wagons by the road we had travelled, we started back for the spring we had found in the morning, and arrived there at sunset, ourselves and horses completely worn down with fatigue.

Captain Caldwell had shot a fat buck during the day, which had been dressed, and by the side of the cool spring we made a delicious meal. At dark we re-saddled our horses, and after finding the trail of the wagons with some difficulty, pushed on and reached the command about ten o'clock, encamped without water, and extremely solicitous for our return.

Early the next morning spies were sent forward to seek water and a passage through the mountains; myself, with three or four companions, going back to the spring, a distance of some ten miles, for a draught of water! It may seem a long distance, ten miles, to go for a draught of fresh water,

\* I have little doubt that we were now among the Wichita Mountains. They have never, I believe, been laid down upon any map, but old trappers and campaigners often speak of them.



but at that time I would have gone fifty. After allowing our horses a rest of two or three hours, and *doing* our washing—for at this time every man was his own washer-woman—we set off to rejoin the command. It may not be amiss to say that our washing was very light, consisting only of a checked shirt and a pair of coarse stockings or socks.

Late in the afternoon we reached the camping-place of the previous night, and found that the command had moved forward. A brisk trot brought us up with our companions at dark, encamped by a small spring and creek of bitter water, strongly impregnated, to judge from the taste, with 'copperas and magnesia. Whatever the substances held in solution by this water may have been, it operated as a powerful cathartic; but the men, unable to find any other, partook of it in large quantities.

On the following morning a council of officers was held, at which it was determined to send a party of fifty of our best-mounted men in a northerly direction, with orders not to return until they had found Red River. Orders were also given to the commander of the party, Captain Caldwell, to send guides back from day to day, as a good wagon road could be found, in order that the expedition might get on as fast as possible.

The party left on the 17th of August, and on the same day Doctor Brashear, our assistant surgeon, died of a liver complaint, and was buried with military honours. He was a native, if I recollect right, of Kentucky, much respected by all who knew him.

Another council was held after the spies had left, and at this meeting it was resolved to reduce our rations of beef. Where we were was problematical; our distance from the settlements no one could even calculate, and as we might still be months in reaching them, it was evident enough that our beef would not hold out. The regular ration of three pounds a day to each man was cut down to a pound and a half, and this at a time when the beef had become extremely poor and destitute of nutriment, and more than the former rations was really required to support men worn down and exhausted by long and fatiguing marches, and weakened by the effects of bad water and no water at all. Prudence justified this reduction, however, and the men submitted to it with a cheerfulness that showed they felt the necessity of the course. In the mean time regular hunting parties were



detailed for the purpose of adding to our scanty stock of provisions as much as possible; yet, although deer and antelope were far from scarce, nothing like a sufficiency of meat could be procured for our wants. Buffalo were seldom seen, only one being killed during the four days we passed at the camp of the bitter waters.

Much to our joy, a guide returned on the evening of the 20th, and reported that a passage had been found through the mountains. Many of us were unwell and extremely weak from the effect of the strong purgative waters; but the news that we were again to be on the move was of the most welcome kind, and every preparation was made for an early start the next morning.

Learning, from the guide who had returned, that there was a large city or commonwealth of prairie dogs directly on the route the command would take, with two companions I went on to visit these neighbours. We were induced by a double object—first, by a desire to examine one of the republics about which prairie travellers have said so much; and secondly, to obtain something to eat, for the flesh of these animals was said to be excellent.

Our road wound up the sides of a gently-ascending mountain for some six or seven miles. On arriving at the summit we found a beautiful table-land spread out before us, reaching miles in every direction. The soil appeared to be uncommonly rich, and was covered with a luxurious growth of mesquit-trees. The grass was of the curly mesquit species, the sweetest and most nutritious of all the different kinds of that grass; and it was told me that the dogs seldom establish their towns and cities unless on sites where this grass is found in abundance.

We had proceeded but a short distance, after reaching this beautiful prairie, before we came upon the outskirts of the commonwealth. A few scattering dogs were seen scampering in, their short, sharp yelps giving a general alarm to the whole community.

The first brief cry of danger from the outskirts was soon taken up in the centre of the city, and now nothing was to be heard or seen in any direction but a barking, dashing, and scampering of the mercurial and excitable denizens of the place, each to his burrow. Far as the eye could reach, the city extended, and all over it the scene was the same.

We rode leisurely along until we had reached the more



thickly-settled portion of the place. Here we halted, and after taking the bridles from our horses to allow them to graze, we prepared for a regular attack upon the inhabitants. The burrows were not more than ten or fifteen yards apart, with well-trodden paths leading in different directions, and I even fancied I could discover something like regularity in the laying out of the streets.

We sat down upon a bank under the shade of a mesquit, and leisurely surveyed the scene before us. Our approach had driven every one to his home in our immediate vicinity, but at the distance of some hundred yards the small mound of earth in front of each burrow was occupied by a dog, sitting erect on his hinder legs and coolly looking about for the cause of the recent commotion. Every now and then some citizen, more adventurous than his neighbour, would leave his lodgings on a flying visit to a friend, apparently exchange a few words, and then scamper back as fast as his legs would carry him.

By-and-by, as we kept perfectly still, some of our near neighbours were seen cautiously poking their heads from out their holes, and looking craftily, and, at the same time, inquisitively about them. Gradually a citizen would emerge from the entrance of his domicile, come out upon his observatory, perk his head cunningly, and then commence yelping somewhat after the manner of a young puppy—a quick jerk of the tail accompanying each yelp. It is this short bark alone that has given them the name of dogs, as they bear no more resemblance to that animal, either in appearance, action, or manner of living, than they do to the hyæna.

We were armed, one with a double-barrelled shot gun, and another with one of Colt's repeating rifles of small bore, while I had my short, heavy rifle, throwing a large ball, and acknowledged by all to be the best weapon in the command. It would drive a ball completely through a buffalo at the distance of a hundred and fifty yards, and there was no jumping off or running away by a deer when struck in the right place—to use a common expression, “he would never know what had hurt him.”\* Hit one of the dogs where we would, with a small ball, he would almost invariably turn a peculiar

\* I trust the reader has forgotten my adventure with the large drove of deer, as related in the previous chapter.



somerset, and get into his hole—but by a ball from my rifle, the head of the animal would be knocked off, and after this there was no escape. With the shot-gun, again, we could do nothing but waste ammunition. I fired it at one dog not ten steps off, having in a good charge of buckshot, and thought I must cut him into fragments—I wounded him severely, but with perhaps three or four shot through him he was still able to wriggle and tumble into his hole.

For three hours we remained in this commonwealth, watching the movements of the inhabitants, and occasionally picking off one of the more unwary. No less than nine were got by the party, and one circumstance I would mention as singular in the extreme, and showing the social relationship which exists among these animals, as well as the kind regard they have one for another. One of them had perched himself upon the pile of earth in front of his hole, sitting up and exposing a fair mark, while a companion's head was seen poking out of the entrance, too timid, perhaps, to trust himself farther. A well-directed ball from my rifle carried away the entire top of the former's head, and knocked him some two or three feet from his post perfectly dead. While reloading, the other boldly came out, seized his companion by one of his legs, and before we could reach the hole had drawn him completely out of sight. There was a touch of feeling in this little incident—a something human, which raised the animals in my estimation, and ever after I did not attempt to kill one of them, except when driven by extreme hunger.

The prairie dog is about the size of the common wild rabbit of the United States, heavier, perhaps, more compact, and with much shorter legs. In appearance it closely resembles the woodchuck, or groundhog, of the Northern and Middle States, although not more than two thirds as large. The colour is the same, being a dark reddish brown, while the formation of the head and teeth is the same as in all the different species of squirrels, to which family it belongs. In their habits they are clannish, social, and extremely convivial, never living alone like other animals, but, on the contrary, always found in villages or large settlements. They are a wild, frolicsome, madcap set of fellows when undisturbed, uneasy and ever on the move, and appear to take especial delight in chattering away the time, and visiting from hole to hole to gossip and talk over each other's



affairs—at least so their actions would indicate. When they find a good location for a village, and there is no water in the immediate vicinity, old hunters say, they dig a well to supply the wants of the community. On several occasions I crept close to their villages, without being observed, to watch their movements. Directly in the centre of one of them I particularly noticed a very large dog, sitting in front of the door or entrance to his burrow, and by his own actions and those of his neighbours it really seemed as though he was the president, mayor, or chief—at all events, he were the “big dog” of the place. For at least an hour I secretly watched the operations in this community. During that time the large dog I have mentioned received at least a dozen visits from his fellow-dogs, which would stop and chat with him a few moments, and then run off to their domiciles. All this while, he never left his post for a moment, and I thought I could discover a gravity in his deportment not discernible in those by which he was surrounded. Far is it from me to say that the visits he received were upon business, or had anything to do with the local government of the village; but it certainly appeared so. If any animal have a system of laws regulating the body politic, it is certainly the prairie dog.

If a person be fortunate enough to gain the immediate vicinity of one of their villages unobserved—a very difficult matter, for their sentinels are always on the alert—he will discover the inhabitants gambolling, frisking, and running about the well-trodden paths, occasionally stopping a moment as if to exchange a word with a neighbour, and then hurrying back to their own lodges. Should he chance to discover some quiet citizen, sitting gravely at his doorway, he has but to watch him for a short time ere he will notice some eccentricity of conduct. His manner of entering his hole will remind the spectator of the antics of Pantaloon in a pantomime; for, instead of walking quietly in, he does it with an eccentric bound and half somerset, his hind feet knocking together as he pitches headlong into the darkness below; and before the aforesaid spectator has yet fairly recovered from the half laugh caused by the drollery of the movement, he will see the dog slowly thrust his head from his burrow, and with a pert and impudent expression of countenance peer cunningly about, as if to ascertain the effect his recent antic had caused.



A singular species of owl is invariably found residing in and about the dog-towns. It has a longer body and smaller head than the common owl of the settlements, yet possesses all the gravity of deportment and solemnity of mien which distinguish the genus.

One would suppose that a constant intercourse with neighbours of such comic temperaments as the dogs possess, would destroy his austerity of demeanour; yet the owl of the dog-village sits upon the earthen mound in front of the hole, and surveys the eccentricities of his friends without a change of countenance. He joins them not in any of their sports, yet still seems to be on the best of terms; and as he is frequently seen entering and emerging from the same hole, this singular bird may be looked upon as a member of the same family, or at least a retainer whose services are in some way necessary to the comfort and well-being of the animal whose hospitality he shares.

Rattlesnakes, too, and of immense size, dwell in the same lodges with the dogs; but the idea that has been entertained of their living upon sociable terms of companionship is utterly without foundation. The snakes I look upon as loafers, not easily shaken off by the regular inhabitants, and they make use of the dwellings of the dogs as more comfortable quarters than they can find elsewhere. We killed one a short distance from a burrow, which had made a meal of a half-grown dog; and although I do not think they can master the larger animals, the latter are still compelled to let them pass in and out without molestation—a nuisance, like many in more elevated society, that cannot be got rid of.

The first town we visited was much the largest seen on the entire route, being some two or three miles in length by nearly a mile in width at the widest part. In the vicinity were smaller villages—suburbs of the larger town, to all appearance. After spending some three hours in the very heart of the settlements, and until not an inhabitant could be seen in any direction, we re-saddled our horses and set off in search of the command. Thus ended my first visit to one of the numerous prairie-dog commonwealths of the Far West.



## CHAPTER X.

**A Meal of Prairie Dogs.—Indians in Camp.—Horses stolen.—Dog Towns.—Meeting with a Party of Indians.—A dreary Desert.—Latitude and Longitude again taken.—Pleasant Prospects.—Steppes.—Mountains in the Distance.—Singing Birds, and Thoughts of Home.—More Horses stolen.—Arrival at the Quintufne.—Indian Camp.—Caygüas on all Sides.—A Party sent out.—Further Advance impossible.—Preparations for taking a back Track.—Lieutenant Hull and four Men killed by Caygüas.—A Chase after Indians.—Determination to Divide the Command.—Description of the Caygüas.**

We had scarcely travelled three miles, after leaving the large dog-town, before we descried the white tops of our wagons at some distance in our rear. Finding a dry mesquit, we broke off some of the larger branches, kindled a fire, and cooked for each man a dog. The meat we found exceedingly sweet, tender, and juicy—resembling that of the squirrel, only that it was much fatter. Our meal over, we next wasted three or four hours in vainly endeavouring to shoot a deer or antelope. Numbers of them were seen; but the hunting parties had scoured their range, killed several of them, and rendered the animals unusually shy. Late in the afternoon we sought the trail of our wagons, and on finding it, set off at a pace which brought us up with the command ere nightfall, encamped near a large, reddish coloured hill or mountain, and close by a small creek of brackish water—a tributary, doubtless, of the Wichita, or else the main stream.

Scarcely had we finished a scanty supper of poor beef, and hastily rolled ourselves in our blankets, when it commenced raining in torrents—pouring down without intermission for hours, and drenching us completely. Little did we care for this, however, as we had the satisfaction in the morning of getting fresh and pure water in abundance—the first for a week.



After devouring the last of the prairie dogs we had killed the preceding day, wringing our blankets, and drying our clothes as well as we were able, we pursued our journey in a course nearly north-west. We had no little trouble in crossing the creek before us, swollen by the heavy rain of the night previous; but in a couple of hours wagons and all were safely on the opposite side.

After toiling across the soft and muddy prairie a distance of ten miles, we at length reached another running stream, the point at which our guide had left the spy company. Here we halted to await the return of the latter, or until another guide should be sent back. During the night the wind veered round into the northeast, bringing with it a cold, drizzling, and extremely disagreeable rain, which continued the next day. In the mean time the spy company returned, reporting that they had found a large stream to the north, which they confidently believed to be the Red River, or one of its main tributaries.

Night came, the cold rain and raw wind still continuing. We were encamped immediately upon the stream, the banks of which were high, and flanked by a narrow skirting of timber. Under this bank I led my horse at dusk, and tied him fast to a small tree. Here he was protected from the piercing northern blasts, and to afford the same shelter, Doctor Brenham led thither his horse, a noble white animal of the best blood, and confined him to the same tree with mine.

Several of our horses were tied under this bank, the poorer animals being allowed to rough it upon the prairie, in front of our encampment, hobbled, and many of them staked, to prevent the storm from driving them off during the night.

On awaking in the morning, it was ascertained that the horse of Doctor B. had been stolen by Indians. The *larist* was cut, and part of it still fast to the tree. My horse was standing quietly where I had left him, his colour probably preventing the daring robbers from seeing him. Some half dozen horses were taken with Doctor B.'s, among them Mr. Falconer's. Generally the Indians selected the best horses in camp, dark as was the night; but they took themselves in in taking Mr. Falconer's, for he was continually performing some unseemly antics, had frequently caused much fright among our other horses, and was worth but little, even setting his tricks aside.



To shew how daring the Indian horse-thieves were, I have but to mention that Doctor Brenham's horse was tied within six yards of the spot where we were sleeping; and after passing the guard, by no means an easy matter, the rascals were compelled to creep within a few feet of us before they could reach their prey. An Indian bow was found in the vicinity of our camp, which the thieves had left in their haste, and one of the artillery mules was shot through with an arrow, the animal probably not being able to move fast enough when the Indians withdrew from our vicinity.

As the day advanced the rain gradually ceased, and before ten o'clock the sun once more appeared. A happier set of men were never seen, for many of us had eaten, slept, and waked in wet clothes and blankets through the eight-and-forty previous hours. Some little time was occupied in filling up the creek with earth and logs, so as to secure a safe passage for the wagons, and about noon the whole expedition was once more on the road, travelling in a north-west direction. During the day we passed through a succession of dog-towns, scattered along every half mile upon the route, as their favourite grass could be procured. Large numbers of the animals were killed by the men—killed for their meat alone.

At night we encamped in front of a small mot or clump of timber, and near a pond of fresh water. However much the rain of the two previous days had annoyed us, we now found that it had saved the expedition. Not a drop of water, save that which had recently fallen, could be found in any direction, and little doubt was entertained that we must inevitably have perished had it not been for the heavy storms.

A party of three hunters came in after we had encamped, and reported that they had fallen in with a party of nine Indians during the day, and had held a "talk" with them. The fellows spoke Spanish, although badly, and were very insolent in their bearing. They did not dare attack our men, however, and finally rode off yelling across the prairie. They were doubtless Caygüas,\* and belonged to the party that had stolen our horses the night before.

\* Mr. Navarro, who was well acquainted with the different tribes south of Red River, told me they were *Caygüas*, and gave the name the spelling. It is pronounced *Kiwaa*, yet it is generally written *Kiway*.



Another party of our men shortly after came in, their horses loaded down with deer, antelope, and other meat, which they had killed during the day. The mess to which I was attached received a large ration of meat, which those who sent us said was young buffalo. It was fat, tender, and very juicy—the most delicious meat, I then thought, I had ever tasted—and what with some fine mushrooms we had found on the march, together with broiled antelope liver, we made a sumptuous meal. Not a little surprised were we afterward, when we ascertained that the meat we had partaken of so heartily, and praised so much, was the flesh of a *mustang* !

After having tied our horses close at hand, many of them to the wagons, and taken up our quarters in their immediate vicinity, we stretched ourselves upon the ground, and slept soundly, without a visit from Indians, or disturbance of any kind, until near morning, when a pack of wolves, drawn to our camp by the smell of fresh meat, set up a dismal howling. A heavy dew, the first we had noticed since our departure from Austin, had fallen during the night, and the day broke with difficulty through a heavy fog : but, at about eight o'clock, the sun made his appearance, dispersing fog, wolves, dew, and all.

Our course of the previous day, north-west, which was considered the right one, we were still enabled to keep, with an excellent road for the first five miles of our morning's march. About noon we reached a singular tract, unlike anything we had previously seen. North and south as far as the eye could reach, nothing could be seen but a sandy plain, covered with scrub oak bushes, two or three feet high, upon which were found innumerable acorns of a large size. This desert, although the wheels of the wagons sank several inches in the sand, we were obliged to cross. Night set in before the passage was made—horses, cattle, and drivers, alike tired out, with the excessive fatigues of the day. We were fortunate, however, in finding a cool and pure stream of fresh running water, just on the western edge of the waste. On the opposite side, the prairie had been recently burned, the fresh grass just springing up, and here we encamped.

At this camp, the latitude and longitude were taken by Lieutenant Hull. The result of the observation, which, from the instruments not being in order, could not be



depended upon, I inserted in my note-book, but have now forgotten. Lieutenant H. said, that we could not be more than a hundred miles from the settlements, that we could easily reach them in ten days, and expressed himself highly pleased with the prospect before us. Little did he then anticipate the horrible fate that was soon to befall himself, or the many gloomy days of travel, of starvation, and of uncertainty, in store for those, whose spirits he had elevated by anticipations of soon reaching the settlements.

On starting the next morning after this observation was made, and ascending a high ridge of hills in the vicinity, the country before us was found extremely rough and broken. We pushed forward, however, some one way, some another—buffeting, turning, and twisting about, without order or system, until nearly dark. Long and tiresome marches, bad water, and not half enough of even the worst provisions, had combined to weaken and dispirit the men, render them impatient of control, and inclined to disobey all orders. The consequence was, that one party would go in this direction, in quest of grapes or plums, another in that, hunting for game or water, and nearly all discipline was lost. It is difficult, and requires a most efficient officer, to keep even regular soldiers under subjection, when half-starved and broken down by fatigue,—nothing can restrain volunteers under such circumstances.

After crossing and recrossing deep gullies, our progress in one direction impeded by steep hills, and in another by yawning ravines, we finally encamped at night not two miles from where we began our day's march, although we had really travelled fifteen. Large plum patches had been found during the day, and such an inordinate craving had our men for almost any species of vegetable, that the country for miles in every direction was scoured, midnight coming before all the different parties arrived in camp.

A passage out of our difficulties was found next morning, and after winding about until noon among the hills, we at length reached a beautiful table-land covered with mesquit trees.

So suddenly did we leave the rough and uneven surface of the valley, and so striking was the transition, that the scenic world of the theatre—and particularly the change from the humble cottage of the dancing girl to the Hindoo paradise in "La Bayadere"—was brought forcibly to the mind.



On starting in the morning, nothing was to be seen but a rough and rugged succession of hills before us—piled one upon another, each succeeding hill rising above its neighbour. At the summit of the highest of these hills the beautiful and fertile plain opened suddenly to view, giving scope to our vision and our hopes that was unanticipated and thrice welcome. The country between the Cross Timbers and the Rocky Mountains rises by high *steppes*, for the different lines of hills can be called by no other name. As the traveller journeys westward, he meets, at long intervals, ridges of hills and mountains, running nearly north and south, presenting the most serious barriers to his farther advance. As he ascends these, he anticipates a corresponding descent on the opposite side; but in a majority of instances, on reaching the summits, he finds nothing before him but a level and fertile prairie.

We halted an hour or two, on reaching the beautiful table-land, to rest our weary cattle and give our horses an opportunity to graze. Little villages of prairie dogs were scattered about upon the prairie, and numbers were shot by the men, to help out their scanty rations. The fat of this animal, old hunters say, is an infallible remedy for the rheumatism. In the evening we resumed the march, and at sundown encamped upon the banks of a running stream of fresh water. The blue tops of three or four high mountains were discerned in the distance, which, such phases did hope ascribe to them, we thought answered the description Carlos had given of *The Crows*.

We were awakened early the next morning by the warbling of innumerable singing-birds, perched among the bushes along the borders of the stream. Among the notes I recognised those of the robin, the lark, and the blue-bird, and as it was the first time any of them had been heard since the commencement of our journey, thoughts of home and civilization came fresh to the heart here, among the western wilds. How these birds ever strayed so far from their usual haunts, for they are seldom found except in the immediate vicinity of settlements, is more than I can imagine. There they were, however, telling us of scenes to which we had long been strangers, and giving us pleasing but fallacious promises of a speedy return to the abodes of at least semi-civilization. In our fond imaginings they typified the dove, telling us that the wilderness had been



passed; but, alas! their song, like the siren's, was uttered to deceive.

Inspiriting as was the singing of these birds, we were obliged to leave them in the middle of their matinal concert, and pursue our weary march. Throughout the day we had an excellent road, and when night came we had made something like twenty miles, still in a north west direction, which was considered our true course. The mountains that had been seen the day before were now plainly visible, and well answered the description Carlos had given of the landmarks in the neighbourhood of the Narrows of Red River. The opinion advanced by many, that we were approaching the end of our journey, spread a general joy through the camp; and this opinion received fresh strength upon the return of two small hunting parties after night, who reported they had seen what appeared to be Mexican cart tracks upon the prairie. With thankful hearts we swallowed our scanty supper that night, and the burden of our dreams, after retiring to rest upon the ground, was of bread and butter, potatoes, and the other substantials of life—things that had long been strangers to our mouths, but were fresh in our memories.

Early the next morning it was ascertained that several horses and mules were missing, and although diligent search was made by their owners, they were never recovered. The night had been clear and bright, the guard neither seeing nor hearing aught to excite their suspicions; but the animals were stolen, doubtless, by a marauding party of Indians.

The march was once more resumed, several well armed parties scouring the prairies in various directions in search of water, Indians, and our lost animals. About noon, after a toilsome journey through a hilly and broken country, the command crossed the bed of a stream which was evidently a large river during the rainy season. At this time but little water was found, and that so salt it was impossible to drink it. Towards night we came to the banks of a clear and delicious fresh water stream, called, as we afterward ascertained, the Quintufue, the waters of which were bubbling along over a bed of golden sand. Running nearly north and south, at the distance of some six miles to our left, was the chain of hills I have mentioned, and rising above the rest were three peaks, which really deserved the



name of mountains. We crossed the stream with our wagons, and encamped close on the opposite side.

Scarcely had we unsaddled our horses, and turned them loose, before one of our hunting parties came in, and reported that a large body of Indians were in our immediate vicinity, and that they had driven off an immense *cavallada*, or drove of horses. Soon, another party arrived, with information that they had met a small body of Indians, one of whom spoke Spanish. They said that they were Caygüas, and on being interrogated concerning the direction towards Santa Fé, gave equivocal answers. They pointed to the south-west, however, to what appeared a passage through the hills, and said that was the direction to Chihuahua. They pretended to know nothing about the Rio Colorado or Red River. These Indians were mounted on fine horses, dressed in buckskin, and armed with lances and bows and arrows.

The stream upon which we were now encamped appeared to have its source in the long chain of hills upon our left, and ran in nearly a north-east direction. A short distance above us, occupying a beautiful situation on the same stream, the main camp of the Indians in our neighbourhood was discovered. It had apparently been just deserted, the inhabitants in their great haste to drive off and secure their horses, not having time even to *cache*\* their other property. Tent-poles, skins, numerous rough utensils, besides a quantity of dried buffalo, mustang, and deer meat, were found precisely as they had left them. The latter we appropriated to our own use, and, in our half-starving condition, was found extremely palatable.

Captain Strain, with a party of twenty or twenty-five men, was ordered out immediately, with orders to find and bring in some of the Indians, if possible, and at all events to ascertain their feelings and intentions. In the mean time the horses and cattle were herded close within the lines, a strong guard set, and the cannon placed in an advantageous position to guard against a night attack. The night passed off, however, without any alarm.

\* This is a term used by the Rocky Mountain trappers and Western traders, and is equivalent to the English word *bury*. Furs and other valuables, when secreted in the ground, are called *cached*. The word is an obvious derivative from the French *acher*, to hide.



The journey was resumed early in the morning, our course being now nearly north to avoid the chain of hills on our left. By many it was thought that Red River came through a pass in this chain, and it was even conjectured that we should find that stream at the base of the farthest mountain in the ridge, so well did the region about us answer the description given by Carlos, before he left us, of the country in the immediate vicinity of the Narrows.

A party of some twenty or thirty had gone forward in the morning for the purpose of finding the best road, while the main body followed slowly on. While stopping to noon, near a small hole of muddy water, the last mentioned party returned, and reported that they had encountered deep and impassable ravines in a northern direction—impassable even for mules. A halt for the night, although there was no water by this time even for the men, was now called, and a party of ten picked men, well mounted, sent out under Lieutenant Hann to scour the country in a north-east direction, in order, if possible, to find a road around the head of the gullies and ravines. At the time it was considered impossible to cross, with the wagons, the high and rugged hills and mountains west of us, and our only course appeared to be by a road to the north-east.

In the mean time, night overtook us, and still no tidings were received from Captain Strain, who had now been out more than twenty-four hours. The bright dreams of the night before vanished when we saw that our onward course was impeded by impassable barriers, and in their stead were forebodings of the gloomiest nature. When the mind is harassed by uncertainty, it is singular how trifling a thing can raise the spirits to the highest pitch of excitement or depress them to a state bordering on despair.

We passed another night sadly enough, yet without an alarm or losing any of our horses; but the morning brought no news of Captain Strain. Our camp was in a small bend, protected in the rear by a skirting of cotton-wood and hackberry trees which fringed the dry bed of a creek. The berries of the latter tree were ripe, and the limbs were completely stripped by our men, to satisfy a gnawing desire for food of a vegetable nature.

A report was raised, early in the morning, that fresh water had been discovered two miles distant, in the direction



of the mountains, and our suffering animals were driven there immediately ; but at about eight o'clock they returned unsuccessful in their search. To endure the horrible sufferings we were experiencing seemed no longer possible, and at a consultation held among the officers, it was resolved to fall back upon the stream we had left the previous morning, and there await the return of the scouting parties which had been sent out. The weather, I might here add, was insupportably hot, adding much to our suffering.

Our conjectures were anything but flattering on account of the continued absence of Captain Strain and his party, now out more than thirty-six hours. It was known, however, that both he and Lieutenant Hann, as well as the parties of three and five who were out hunting for water on their own account, could easily find their way back to camp by following the trail of the wagons, and immediate preparations were accordingly made to retrace our steps to the old camp, or some point higher up on the same stream.

The horses and mules were driven up and saddled, the oxen were yoked, and the other preparatory work was in progress for our departure, when suddenly a young man came dashing into camp from the northward, evidently much agitated, and announced that a large body of Indians were pursuing a party of our men directly toward us. Scarcely had he finished speaking before a firing was heard but a few hundred yards distant, a slight roll of the prairie concealing the combatants from our sight. Fast as they could mount horses, a party of some fifty of our men dashed off towards the scene of strife, while the wagons were drawn up in square, the cattle and horses brought inside, and every preparation made to resist an attack, which was now considered certain. The first impression was, that the scouting-parties had been entirely cut off, and that these successes would induce the Indians to attack our main body.

Just as the party of our men who had gone out to the relief of their companions reached the spot, the Indians retreated ; but their bloody work was done. Scattered about within the circumference of a few yards were the dead bodies of Lieutenant Hull and four of our men, stripped, scalped, and horribly mutilated, while the appearance of the ground gave strong evidence that manfully and with strong hearts they had resisted the attack of their adver-



saries. They had left camp but a short time previous, probably with the hope of finding water, and in returning had been thus cruelly murdered. But one look on their mangled bodies was sufficient to stir deep feelings of revenge in every heart, and madly did our men spur their horses in pursuit, with the vain hope of avenging the death of their companions. The Indians were at least four times their number, yet they retreated, and being far better mounted were able to keep out of the way. So near, however, were our men, that they could plainly see the dead bodies of several of the Indians, packed upon extra horses they had with them for that purpose. The prairie warriors always have horses trained especially to carry off their dead or wounded companions, which they take with them on going into action ; and it is considered one of the greatest calamities that can befall them if they are compelled to leave one of their number in the hands of an enemy.

The pursuit of the bloodthirsty Caygüas, for such the Indians proved to be, was continued by our men until it was evident that they could not be overtaken, and then reluctantly given up. Several times during the chase, the Indians reined up their well-trained horses on the higher rolls of the prairies, and formed in line as if intending to give battle ; but before our men could get within gunshot they were off again, with lightning speed, across the plain. On returning to the spot where our men had fallen, a closer examination showed how hard and desperate had been the struggle. Lieutenant Hull had received no less than thirty lance and arrow wounds before he fell, and the broken stock of one of Colt's rifles was still retained in the grasp of a stout man, named Mayby, plainly telling us that he had fought to the last, and that after discharging the piece he had still continued the combat. The heart of one of the men was cut out, and had not the Indians been driven off the other bodies would have been mutilated in the same way. Two of the horses of our unfortunate comrades were lanced close by—the others were probably in better condition and more able to run, and had been taken off as spoils by the savages. It was evident enough that Lieutenant Hull and his men had retreated from the Indians until they had found it impossible to elude them, and that they had then thrown themselves from their horses in a body and sold their lives at a fearful rate. The resistance they made had pro-



bably terrified their adversaries, and induced them to fly when they saw our party coming up, although they outnumbered the Texans at least as three to one.

A party of fifty well-armed men, taking with them shovels, were sent out immediately on the melancholy errand of burying our murdered companions, while the main body retraced their steps towards the Quintufue, which is said to be a branch of the Palo Duro, or Hard Wood River. Scarcely had we started, before all were rejoiced by the appearance of Captain Strain with part of his men. He told us that he had scoured the prairies in almost every direction, but without success, having been unable to hold a parley with any of the Indians, although he had seen several small parties. He also reported that he had been unable to find either a road or water: there was a route by which the ravines might be headed in a course a little north of east, but in no other direction. A part of his men had left him early in the morning, having gone back to the Quintufue for water.

About noon the main body of the command again reached the river, at a point somewhat higher up than the former camping-ground. Here, after drinking incredible quantities of the water, and allowing our suffering animals also to quench athirst which their eyes and general appearance too plainly shewed had nearly driven them mad, a strong position was chosen, and we encamped.

In the evening a general consultation of all the officers was held. At this meeting it was resolved to despatch a party of one hundred chosen men, on the best horses in camp, with instructions not to return until the settlements of New Mexico were found. Although no hopes were entertained that a passage over the mountains could be effected by the wagons, it was still thought that mounted men would be able to accomplish it.

The distance to the nearest settlements was not supposed to be more than one hundred miles at farthest, and it was accordingly determined that the party should take five days' provisions, allowing but scanty rations. The course to be taken was northwest, and this course was to be kept, as near as circumstances would admit, until the party struck either the settlements near Santa Fé, the Rio Grande at a point below, or the trail of the St. Louis traders above. On reaching New Mexico, a party was immediately to be sent back to the command with guides and provisions.



However impolitic it may be considered to divide a command, in this instance such a course could not be avoided. We were completely lost, and without power of moving forward; our provisions, which had for weeks been scanty, were now almost entirely exhausted; the men were enfeebled by long marches, with only poor beef enough each day to support nature;\* and in addition we were surrounded by a large and powerful tribe of well-mounted Indians, scouring our vicinity, and always on the look-out to pick off any small party that might be sent out to hunt, or for other purposes. All these reasons considered, it will at once be seen that but two courses offered—one, to destroy the wagons, and to retreat hastily towards Texas; the other, to divide the command, and send one party forward with orders not to return until the settlements were reached. I will not say the wiser course was adopted; but in answer to any one who may blame the leaders of the expedition for dividing the command, I would remark that few men, under the circumstances, would have advised to the contrary.

So soon as a division of the command had been determined upon, several of the oxen were killed for the use of the party to be sent onward, and preparations were made to dry the meat on the ensuing morning. Night came, but with it came no news of Lieutenant Hann and his little party. On calling the roll it was also found that others besides those killed in the morning were missing, and with the full conviction that they had shared the fate of Lieutenant Hull and his men, we that night laid ourselves to rest. The next morning we were still without tidings of our absent comrades.

The party detailed by General McLeod to march in advance, was placed under the command of Captain Sutton, an excellent officer. It consisted of eighty seven officers and privates, with merchants, travellers, and servants enough to swell the number to ninety-nine. Among the officers were Captain Lewis, and Lieutenants Lubbock, Munson, Brown, and Seavy,† the latter acting as adjutant: the civilians were

\* It may not be amiss to state that every part of each ox killed was devoured: the blood, hide, entrails—nothing was lost.

† Lieutenant Seavy was educated at West Point, had seen much service in Texas, and was one of the best officers connected with the Santa Fé expedition. He died of yellow fever at Puerta Nacional Mexico, much beloved by his brother officers as well as the common soldiers.



Colonel Cooke, Dr. Brenham, Major Howard, Messrs. Van Ness, Fitzgerald, Frank Combs, and myself. We were all well armed and mounted on the best horses in camp, and deemed ourselves able to cut our way through any party of Indians that may dare to attack us. That we should be molested was considered more than probable, as it was impossible to leave the command without being perceived by the scouting parties of Caygüas continually hovering about our camp, who could observe our every movement. In a fortified position we felt confident they would not attack the command; but now that we were divided, they might be emboldened to attack the smaller party.

The Caygüas appear to be a powerful tribe, about whom, from their geographical position, little has been known. Their range is south of the line of travel of the Missouri traders, and north of such parts of the Camanche country as were known to the Texans, their hunting grounds probably not having been visited by the whites previous to our march across them. In their customs and manner of living they resemble, in every way, the Camanches, and may be said to be a branch of that large and powerful tribe. They lead a roving life, esteem the whites as their natural enemies, and never give them quarter. Like the Camanches, they are expert on horseback to an extraordinary degree, leaping from one horse to another while at full speed, and performing many feats upon the prairies never undertaken even by the best equestrians of the circus. In their attacks upon an enemy they expose but a small portion of their persons, riding along in parallel lines with their enemies, their bodies lying on the opposite sides of their well-trained steeds, and in this position they discharge their arrows directly under their horse's necks. If they meet with an unfortunate party whom they outnumber, they charge openly, dispatching all with their lauces. While encamped they live in tents constructed of poles and buffalo hides. These can be struck at a moment's warning, and the whole party will move off in an incredibly short space of time. They appear to be on terms of peace with the New Mexicans so far as it suits their interest and convenience—no farther; at one time trading and exchanging their skins in amity, and almost in the same breath making a descent upon the unprotected frontiers, plundering and frequently murdering the inhabitants. When we passed through their country, a party of Mexican traders



were among them, bartering meal, blankets, and trinkets for buffalo and deer skins. Some of these Mexicans we afterward saw, and from them learned that ten of their warriors, besides a principal chief were killed by Lieutenant Hull and his brave companions before they were overpowered. The traders also gave us an account of their ceremonies on returning to camp with their scalps and trophies. A wild dance was executed by the braves in celebration of their victory, while the women tore their hair and faces, and ran naked through the prickly pear and thorn bushes, in token of their grief for the loss of their husbands and brothers. Whether they considered our visit as hostile or not it is impossible to say; they had shed blood, and we well knew they would not cease murdering any of our companions they might dare attack. They have but a small number of rifles among them, and these are ineffective and useless in their hands: the larger portion of them are armed with shields, lances, and bows and arrows, weapons they use with surprising dexterity. Such are the most obvious features of a tribe of Indians occupying the prairies near the head waters of the Wichita, Colorado, Brazos, and Red Rivers.

The morning of August 31st was occupied in partially drying our meat over slow fires, and in making preparations for our departure. Horses were shod, bullets moulded, our rifles and pistols thoroughly examined, and nothing neglected in the way of that precaution our uncertain adventure demanded. We were placed in a position demanding some extraordinary effort. The repeated reverses that we had met with, the hunger and fatigue which we had undergone, and the impossibility of travelling farther with the wagons in any direction that would bring us nearer the settlements, formed a combination of evils for which a retreat or the plan determined upon was the only remedy. The indefatigable *go-a-headity* which characterizes the Anglo-Saxon race, no matter where or under what circumstances placed, prevented the adoption of the former plan—the same spirit induced the officers of the expedition to adopt and carry out the latter. Almost every one appeared to rejoice when this course was determined upon. The harassing uncertainties which now encompassed all, would speedily be removed, and we should soon know *where we were*.

As the advance party were about starting, we were all rejoiced by the appearance of Lieutenant Hann and his



men. He had met with several small parties of the Indians, and endeavoured to induce them to come in and hold a friendly talk ; but they were sulky and disposed to fight, although not strong enough to engage him. Up to this time he knew nothing of the murder of Lieutenant Hull's party. The other men who were missing, as I have since been informed, never came in, but were undoubtedly killed by the Indians.



## CHAPTER XI.

**Departure of the Advance in search of the Settlements.—Level Prairie before us.—Speculations in relation to Red River.—A Bear Chase.—Sagacity of a Mule.—Arrival at a singular Chasm.—A heavy Prairie Shower.—Scarcity of Game.—Arrival at another awful Abyss.—Mustangs and Antelopes.—Curlews.—A Buffalo descried.—Tom Hancock and his Skill.—Description of the Chase.—Poor Prospects of a Supper.**

THE sun had but a short hour to run, in order to finish his day's work on the 31st of August, when, in double file and close order, our provisions for the march hanging at our saddle-skirts, we left our companions on the Quintufue and struck across the prairie on our journey in search of the settlements of New Mexico, Mr. Hunt, the engineer of the expedition, taking the guidance. A brisk trot of two hours brought us, as night was throwing its sable drapery over the scene, to the foot of the mountains, and here, after choosing a strong position, we encamped. No water could be found in our vicinity, but as we had filled our gourds and canteens before we left the main body, we suffered but little. Early the next morning, after travelling a mile or two along the foot of the high range, we discovered what seemed to be an Indian trail, the marks where the tent-poles had been dragged over the ground being plainly visible, leading in a zigzag course up the sides of the mountains. This we followed, and towards noon found ourselves at the summit of the chain. Here we were again gratified by finding spread out before us a perfectly level prairie, extending as far as the eye could reach, and without a tree to break its complete monotony. We halted a few minutes to rest our horses, and occupied the time in surveying the calm and beautiful valley lying hundreds of feet below us.

It was a lovely scene, beheld from the point where we stood, and I could hardly believe that but a few hours pre-



vious a horrible tragedy had been enacted upon its fair surface. Softened down by the distance, there was a tranquillity about it which seemed as though it never had been broken. The deep green skirtings of the different water-courses relieved the eye as it fell upon the wide-extending plain. The silver waters of the Quintufue, now reduced apparently to a mere thread, were occasionally brought to view as some turn of the stream threw them in line with us, and again they were lost to the sight under the rich foliage of the banks. The white tops of our wagons shewed the present encampment of our main body, while the small black spots around, gave us the pleasing assurance that the cattle and horses were still there, and that the camp had been unmolested. In other parts of the valley, too, small moving specks were seen—mustangs, or perhaps our Indian enemies prowling about—but other than these no living objects met our gaze. Almost the whole valley was bordered by the yawning chasms that had impeded the progress of our wagons, now brought more plainly to view by the elevation upon which we stood, and the whole scene forcibly reminded me of one of Salvator Rosa's beautiful landscapes, framed with rough, gnarled, and unfinished oak.

The elevated chain of hills or mountains we had ascended, if they really deserve that title, was but another *steppe* towards the high table-land which forms the base of the Rocky Mountains. Where, now, was Red River? If the large stream our guides and scouting parties had seen, while in the valley below us, and in a northeast direction from the spot where Lieutenant Hull was killed—if that stream was Red River, then its source must have been near the base of the high steppe upon which we now stood, and the wide and almost dry beds we had crossed within the few past days were but its tributaries. In springtime, when the prairie snows melt away, and the early rains fall, these beds are doubtless full, and when joined in one common channel, form the great stream which, after passing through the Cross Timbers fertilizes the valley, known as the Red River country. The Rocky Mountains may justly be considered the parents of most of the large streams of North America; but I cannot think that they give birth to the river we had been so long seeking. On the contrary, I am bold in hazarding the opinion that the Rio Colorado or Red River of the United States, the Brazos de Dios, and the Rio Colorado or Red



River of Texas, all take their rise in the centre of the prairies, at no great distance apart, and that the steppe we had now reached is their extreme western limit. Their waters are similar, being of a dirty, brownish red colour, and of a slightly salt and bitter taste, which goes far to prove their common origin.

From the hillsides, as was the case with the Palo Duro and Quintufue,\* small streams of fresh and limpid water arise; but both their purity of taste and virgin transparency of colour are lost the moment they strike the reddish clay of the lower prairies, and they become adulterated by the copperas and sulphate of soda with which these plains appear to be impregnated. The Red River of the United States has been traced, and is well known to a point west of Coffee's Upper Station, a noted Indian trading post above the mouth of the False Washita; beyond that, certainty loses itself in speculation, and the true stream, its courses and its sources, will never be known until it is explored to its fountain head—and this point will be found, I have little hesitation in saying, some two hundred and fifty or three hundred miles east south-east of Santa Fé, and but a few miles from the *steppe* to which I have now brought my reader. In these conjectures I am borne out by the testimony of Albert Pike, now a well-known lawyer of Arkansas, and a poet and writer of great distinction.† This gentleman, in 1832, made a hazardous journey from Santa Fé to the western settlements of Arkansas. His general course, for the first three hundred miles, was nearly south-east, the last two hundred taking him directly across the immense plain called *Llano Estacado*—Stake Prairie—by the New Mexicans. Mr. Pike had now reached the head waters of the Brazos, and in about the same longitude we had reached when Lieutenant Hull and his men were killed. He then continued down one of the forks of the Brazos some hundred and eighty miles, the stream running nearly south-east, and a part of the country being broken into rough and mis-shapen hills resembling those we encountered on the stream which I

\* These names we learned from the New Mexican traders, whom we afterward met.

† His "Hymns to the Gods," published several years since in Blackwood, are gems of rarest strength and beauty, and as such were highly lauded by Professor Wilson himself.



have put down as the Wichita. The course of Mr. Pike was next north-east, some hundred and forty miles, until he struck the Red River of the United States. The point at which he reached this stream was probably a little to the east of the Waco village I have described, and below the mouth of the Wichita. From the appearance of Red River—the similarity of its waters, both in colour and taste, to those of the Brazos—Mr. Pike entertains little doubt that they both take their rise in the same section of country, and nearly in the same longitude—the former rising but a short distance to the north of the latter. But I am running before my narrative, and after promising other speculations in relation to Red River in a more befitting place, will reconduct the reader to the summit of the high steppe upon which we now found ourselves.

After giving our animals half an hour's rest, for they were much jaded by the precipitous ascent up which they had clambered, we resumed our journey in a north-west direction. We had ridden but a short distance before a large black bear was seen some mile or thereabout to the left of us. Major Howard immediately set off with the intention of running him down, and after a short race succeeded in placing himself on the opposite side, so as to bring the animal directly between him and our line of march. The chase was now assuming an exciting character, the bear, from the lateness of the season, being poor in flesh, and able to run nearly as fast as our fleetest horses. Onward they came, directly towards us, and when within a quarter of a mile I cocked a pistol and left the ranks with the intention of having a first shot at the animal. When within some twenty-five yards, I reined up my horse, and while taking deliberate aim, at not half that distance, I was surprised to see the bear turn a species of somerset, and commence kicking with his hind legs. Unseen by me, one of our Mexican servants had crept up close on the opposite side of my horse, and had noosed the animal with a *lariat* just as I was pulling the trigger of my pistol. Bruin soon loosed himself from his fastenings, and while running down the line was shot by Major Howard.

The journey was again resumed, and continued at a rapid pace until nearly the middle of the afternoon. A short halt was then called to rest our horses, at a place where no water was seen, but where the grass was excellent. The



bridles were no sooner slipped from the heads of our animals than an elderly and sagacious mule, instead of beginning to nip the short grass, put off at a deliberate trot in a south-west direction. "That cunning old rascal scents water *sure*," said his owner, and sure enough he did; for he had not proceeded three hundred yards before we saw him stoop his head and commence drinking at a pond-hole which was concealed from our sight. The discovery of this water was very opportune; for we had drunk but little in nearly twenty-four hours, and our animals had not swallowed a drop.

As soon as we had given our horses and mules a short rest, and made a light meal of our half-cured meat, we re-saddled, and resumed our journey. We were going forward at a rapid pace, the prairies before us presenting no other appearance than a slightly undulating but smooth surface, when suddenly, and without previous sign or warning, we found ourselves upon the very brink of a vast and yawning chasm, or *canon*, as the Mexicans would call it, some two or three hundred yards across, and probably eight hundred feet in depth! As the front ranks suddenly checked their onward course, and diverged at right angles, the rear sections were utterly at a loss to account for a movement so irregular; they could not see even the edge of the fearful abyss at a distance of fifteen yards from its very brink. The banks at this place were almost perpendicular, and from the sides projected jagged and broken rocks, with here and there a stunted, scrubby cedar. There was some appearance of a zigzag and precipitous trail down the sides of the canon at the point where we first reached it, and Mr. Hunt and Dr. Brenham took it with the intention of reaching the bottom if possible: they continued their winding path until they seemed mere pigmies, and only stopped when their progress was arrested by high and perpendicular bluffs. On their return, after an absence of some half an hour, they said they had not advanced half way to the bottom, and that to attempt crossing at this, or any other point within sight, would be useless. We travelled a mile or two along the banks, but finding it impossible to discover a crossing-place, we finally encamped in a little hollow of the prairie near the edge of the ravine. Here, finding that a large portion of our badly-cured meat was spoiling, we cooked what could still be eaten, and threw much of it away for the wolves and buzzards.



Young Frank Combs and myself sought a comfortable lodging in a little sandy gully, which had been formed by the washing of previous rains. A fine bed it was, too, for about an hour; but just as we commenced dozing, we were startled by a tremendous thunder storm. In three minutes we were wet through, and in five found that we were fairly floating, our rifles and saddles, the latter of which we used for pillows, being completely under water. We snatched our rifles from the swift-running stream, took up our bed, and walked to higher ground amid the terrible storm. We found means, however, to set fire to a large dry cedar, once more rolled up in our blankets, and after thinking of home and its thousand comforts, fell asleep. Yet never shall I forget the early part of that awful night. The lightning appeared to be playing about in the chasm far below us, bringing out, in wild relief, its bold and craggy sides. Deafening peals of thunder seemed rising from the very bowels of the earth, and then muttered away in the distance, rejoicing, as it were, at their escape from confinement. The yawning abyss appeared to be a workshop for the manufacture of the storm, and there we were at the very doors when the Ruler of the elements sent forth a specimen of his grandest, his sublimest work.

When morning came, which was bright and cloudless, we crawled out from under our wet blankets, and I doubt whether a more miserable, wo-begone set of unfortunates, in appearance, have been since the passage of the Red Sea. Not a man among us who was not as wet as though he had been towed astern of a steamer from the Falls of St. Anthony to the Balize, and without the privilege of going ashore at any of the "intermediate landings." Of my own personal appearance I can say nothing, as among our scanty stock of furniture there was no such luxury as a looking-glass; but the unshaven faces of my companions resembled, to use a threadbare comparison, the title-pages of so many distress memorials, and I cannot flatter myself into the belief that I differed from them in any material respect. Each individual hair upon our heads was sticking out almost anywhere, and to suit its own convenience; our broad-brimmed hats were cocked up, lopped down, and knocked into, or rather out of, all manner of shape and comeliness; our caps were mashed; our scanty and ragged vestments, full of sand and water, stuck close to our persons, or hung



heavily and drooping downward like weeping willows; and to sum all up, I verily believe that we could not have "passed muster" even in the ragged and renowned regiment promiscuously pressed into service by one Sir John Falstaff, years before the Santa Fé expedition was thought of. Wretched and forlorn as we seemed, however, chilly and miserable as we felt after our soaking, good-humoured jokes were cracked at each other's expense, and every one was offering consolation and pity to his neighbour with an assumed sincerity and gravity that would have drawn a horse-laugh from Werter in his most sorrowful moments.

Unwilling to load our horses with wet and heavy blankets, we employed some two hours in spreading and drying them as much as possible. In the mean time, a scanty breakfast of half-cooked, half-dried beef was swallowed, our rifles were discharged, cleaned, and reloaded, and our powder examined to see that all was right. To keep his powder dry is the first thing the prairie traveller thinks of when a rain comes on, and fortunately we found that ours was all in good order, although it seemed almost a miracle that much of it was not spoiled.

The immense chasm we were upon, ran nearly north and south, and by watching the current of the stream far below us—a furious torrent raised by the heavy rain—it was seen that it ran towards the former point. This induced Mr. Hunt to seek a crossing to the southward, and, after saddling our horses, we set off in that direction. We had gone but a few miles, when large buffalo or Indian trails were seen, running in a southwest course, and as we travelled on, others were noticed bearing more to the west. We were obliged to keep out some distance from the ravine, to avoid the small gullies emptying into it, and to cut off the numerous turns, and in this way we travelled until about noon, when we struck a large trail running directly west. This we followed, and, on reaching the main chasm, found that it led to the only place where there was any chance of crossing. Here, too, we found that innumerable trails centred, coming from every direction; proof conclusive that we must cross here or travel many weary miles out of our way.

Dismounting from our animals, we looked at the yawning abyss before us, and the impression upon all was that the passage was impossible. That buffalo, mustangs, and very



probably Indians with their horses had crossed here, was evident enough, for a zigzag path had been worn down the rocky and precipitous sides; but many of our horses were unused to sliding down precipices as well as climbing them, and drew back repulsively on being led to the brink of the chasm. After many unsuccessful attempts, a mule was started down the path, then another was induced to follow, while some of the horses were fairly forced, by dint of much shouting and pushing, to attempt the descent. In some places they went along the very verge of rocky and crumbling ledges, where a false step would have precipitated them hundreds of feet to instant death; in others they were compelled to slide down pitches nearly perpendicular. Many of them were much bruised, but after an hour's hard work we all gained the bottom without sustaining any serious injury. Finding a small patch of grass in the low and secluded dell at the bottom of the abyss, we halted for an hour or two to rest our weary animals, and to seek the trail leading up the steep on the opposite side. This we finally discovered, and after the greatest exertions, succeeded in clambering to the top, where we once more found ourselves upon a smooth and level prairie. I shuddered, on looking back, to see the frightful chasm we had so successfully passed, and at the time thought it almost a miracle that we had got safely across; but a few days afterward I was convinced that in comparison the undertaking we had just accomplished was as nothing.

After giving our animals another rest, we resumed our journey across the lone and dreary prairie. Not a tree or bush, and hardly a weed could be seen in any direction. A green carpeting of short grass, which even at this season was studded with innumerable strange flowers and plants, was spread over the vast expanse, with naught else to relieve the eye. People may talk of the solitude of our immense American forests, but there is a company even in trees that one misses upon the prairie. There is food for thought, too, in the ocean wave, not to be found in the unchangeable face of these great Western wastes, and nowhere else does one feel that sickly sensation of loneliness with which he is impressed when nothing but a boundless prairie is around him. There he feels as if *in* the world, but not *of* it—there he finds no sign or trace to tell him that there is something beyond, that millions of human beings are



living and moving upon the very earth on which he stands. Shakspeare was in the woods when he found

“ ———tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”

Had he been on the immense prairie I am now speaking about he would have found no such companionship.

We rode briskly forward until near sundown, and then encamped by the side of a small water hole—the basin formed by a hollow in the prairie. Although we were only two days out, the rations of many of the men were nearly gone by this time, so much of the meat had been spoiled from having been improperly cured. Not a buffalo could be seen on the prairie, nor was any fresh “sign” visible. The mustangs, too, had left this part of the plain, as also the deer and antelope, driven off, doubtless, by the scarcity of water. Had it not been for the showers which fell while travelling this dreary waste, we should all most certainly have perished; for even the immense canons had no other water in them than that which had fallen after we left the Quintufue.

Scarcely had we rolled ourselves up in our blankets before we were again visited by a heavy shower; but this time we had chosen higher ground, and though thoroughly drenched, we were not washed from our fastenings, as on the night before.

The morning of September 3rd broke bright and cloudless, the sun rising from out the prairie in all his majesty. Singular as it may appear, nearly every shower, from the time we left Austin until we reached the settlements of New Mexico, fell during the night, generally commencing shortly after sundown. Again we were compelled to lose some two hours in spreading and drying our clothes and blankets, after which we saddled our animals and pursued our weary journey. Our course, as I have already observed, was northwest, and we were now enabled to keep it without difficulty.

We had scarcely proceeded six miles, after drying our blankets, when we suddenly came upon another immense rent or chasm in the earth, exceeding in depth the one we had so much difficulty in crossing the day before. No one was aware of its existence until we were immediately upon its brink, when a spectacle, exceeding in grandeur anything



we had previously beheld, came suddenly in view. Not a tree or bush, no outline whatever, marked its position or course, and we were all lost in amazement as one by one we left the double-file ranks and rode up to the verge of the yawning abyss.

In depth it could not be less than eight hundred or a thousand feet, was from three to five hundred yards in width, and at the point where we first struck it, the sides were nearly perpendicular. A sickly sensation of dizziness was felt by all as we looked down, as it were, into the very depths of the earth. In the dark and narrow valley below, an occasional spot of green relieved the eye, and a small stream of water, now rising to the view, then sinking beneath some huge rock, was bubbling and foaming along. Immense walls, columns, and in some places what appeared to be arches, were seen standing, modelled by the wear of the water, undoubtedly, yet so perfect in form that we could with difficulty be brought to believe that the hand of man had not fashioned them. The rains of centuries, falling upon an immense prairie, had here found a reservoir, and their workings upon the different veins of earth and stone had formed these strange and fanciful shapes.

Before reaching the chasm we had crossed numerous large trails, leading a little more to the west than we were travelling; and the experience of the previous day led us to suppose that they all terminated at a common crossing near by. In this conjecture we were not disappointed, for a trot of half an hour brought us into a large road, the thoroughfare along which millions of Indians, buffalos, and mustangs had evidently travelled for years. Perilous as the descent appeared, we well knew there was no other near. The leading mule was again urged forward, the steadier and older horses were next driven over the sides, and the more skittish and untractable brought up the rear. Once in the narrow path, which led circuitously down the descent, there was no turning back, and our half-maddened animals finally reached the bottom in safety. Several large stones were loosened from their fastenings by our men, during the frightful descent; these would leap, dash, and thunder down the precipitous sides, and strike against the bottom far below us with a terrific and reverberating crash.

We found a running stream on reaching the lower level of the chasm, on the opposite side of which was a romantic



dell covered with short grass, and a few scattering cotton woods. A large body of Indians had encamped on this very spot but a few days previous, the wilted limbs of the trees and other "sign" showing that they had made it a resting place. We, too, halted a couple of hours, to give our horses an opportunity to graze and rest themselves. The trail which led up on the opposite side was discovered a short distance above us, to the south, winding up the steep and ragged sides of the acclivity.

As we journeyed along this dell, all were again struck with admiration at the strange and fanciful figures made by the washing of the waters during the rainy season. In some places perfect walls, formed of reddish clay, were seen standing, and were they anywhere else it would be impossible to believe that other than the hand of man had formed them. The veins of which these walls were composed, were of even thickness, very hard, and ran perpendicularly; and when the softer sand which had surrounded them was washed away, the veins still remained standing upright, in some places a hundred feet high, and three or four hundred in length. Columns, too, were there, and such was their appearance of architectural order, and so much of chaste grandeur was there about them, that we were lost in wonder and admiration. Sometimes the breastworks, as of forts, would be plainly visible; then, again, the frowning turrets of some castle of the olden time. Cumbersome pillars of some mighty pile, such as is dedicated to religion or royalty, were scattered about; regularity was strangely mingled with disorder and ruin, and nature had done it all. Niagara has been considered one of her wildest freaks, but Niagara sinks into insignificance when compared with the wild grandeur of this awful chasm—this deep, abyssmal solitude, as Carlyle would it. Imagination carried us back to Thebes, to Palmyra, and to ancient Athens, and we could not help thinking that we were now among their ruins.

Our passage out of this place was effected with the greatest difficulty. We were obliged to carry our rifles, holsters, and saddle bags in our hands, and in clambering up a steep pitch, one of the horses, striking his shoulder against a projecting rock, was precipitated some fifteen or twenty feet directly upon his back. All thought he must be killed by the fall; but strangely enough, he rose imme-



diately, shook himself, and a second effort in climbing proved more successful—the animal had not received the slightest apparent injury!

By the middle of the afternoon we were all safely across, after passing five or six hours completely shut out from the world. Again we found ourselves upon the level prairie, and on looking back, after proceeding some hundred yards, not a sign of the immense chasm was visible. The plain we were then upon, was at least one hundred and fifty miles in width, and the two chasms I have mentioned were the reservoirs of the heavy body of rain which falls during the wet season, and at the same time its conductors to the running streams. The prairie is undoubtedly the largest in the world, and the canons are in perfect keeping with the size of the prairie. Whether the waters which run into them sink into the earth, or find their way to the Canadian, is a matter of uncertainty—but I am inclined to believe the latter to be the fact.

At sundown we halted by the side of a water hole, and encamped for the night. Many of the men were now entirely out of provisions, while those who still had a little beef left had saved it by stinting themselves on the previous days. The worst of our sufferings had commenced.

At an early hour on the ensuing morning our march was continued, the cravings of hunger by this time being sensibly felt by all. Small droves of deer and antelope were seen during the day, brought from the water-courses doubtless by the recent rains, and towards night a drove of mustangs was descried upon a roll of the prairie half a mile ahead of us. They were all extremely shy, however, and although many rifles were discharged, not a shot was successful—we could not get near enough to kill one of them. Flocks of small birds, about the size of and in many respects resembling the blackbird, travelled with us much of this day's march, hovering along in front and rear of the line, and so exceedingly tame that they would light on our hats and arms, and on the necks and heads of our horses, without manifesting the least sign of fear. One or two of these singular birds were caught and killed, and found to be fat and of good flavour. That night we encamped near a water-hole, covering an area of some twenty acres, but very shallow. Flocks of large curlews, one of the finest birds that fly, were hovering and lighting about on all sides. Had I been in possession of a double-



barrelled gun with small shot I would have had at least one good meal; but I had only a heavy rifle, and went to my lodgings on the ground supperless.

About two o'clock the next morning we saddled our horses and resumed the march, journeying still in a northwest course by the stars. On leaving the main camp on the Quintufue it was thought by all that we could not be more than a hundred miles from San Miguel—we had now more than made that distance, and were still upon the immense prairie. To relieve ourselves from the horrible suspense we were in, to get *somewhere*, in short was our eager aim, and hurriedly we pressed onwards, in the hope of finding relief. Our horses in the mean time, had comparatively suffered less than ourselves, for the grazing on the prairie had been good; but the hurried marches and the difficult crossings of the immense chasms now began to tell upon them.

At sunrise we halted near a small pond of water to rest the animals and allow them an hour to feed. Large white cranes were standing about in the pond, and flocks of ducks were swimming upon the surface. While we were lounging on the ground, a large antelope was seen slowly approaching us—now stopping, then walking, a few steps nearer—evidently inquisitive as to who, or rather what we were. His curiosity finally cost him his life; for although Captain Sutton the evening before had given orders that not another shot should be fired without his consent, one of our men could not resist the temptation of bringing the antelope down. The man was arrested and sent to the rear for this disobedience of orders, but I have little doubt the excellent meal he made more than compensated for the disgrace. The order of Captain S. that no rifle should be discharged, was an excellent one, as many shots had been wasted on the previous day; but the best officer in existence cannot restrain a half-starved man when he sees a hearty meal directly within his grasp. A number of antelopes were seen in the neighbourhood of the water hole, but no farther attempt was made to shoot them.

Shortly after this incident of killing the antelope we again resumed our journey. The same dreary spectacle, a boundless prairie, was before us—not a sign was observable that we were nearing its edge. We journeyed rapidly on until near the middle of the afternoon, when a dark spot was noticed some mile or a mile and a half directly in advance.



At first it was thought to be a low bush, but as we gradually approached, it had more the appearance of a rock, although nothing of the kind had been seen from the time of our first coming upon the prairie, except at the chasms.

"A buffalo!" cried one of the men, whose keen eye had penetrated the mystery: "a buffalo, lying down, and asleep!"

A spy-glass in our possession proved the man's assertion. Here, then, was a chance for at least as much as we could all eat, and the temptation was too strong to be resisted. The Leather Stocking of the party, Tom Hancock, was deputed to go forward on foot with a rifle, in the hope that he might at least get near enough to wound the animal, while myself and three of my companions, who were better mounted than the rest, made every preparation for a chase to the death.

Disencumbering our animals of every pound of superfluous weight, we tied handkerchiefs over our heads and prepared for a sport rendered doubly exciting by our starving condition. Each of my comrades had a pair of heavy belt pistols, and in addition one of Colt's revolving pistols, with a cylinder containing five shots. In my holsters I had a heavy Harper's Ferry dragoon-pistol, throwing a large ball with great force and accuracy, besides a bell-muzzled affair which was loaded with two or three balls and some twenty-five or thirty buckshot. With this I intended at least to give the buffalo a broadside which would bleed him freely. To complete my armament, I also had one of Colt's pistols, which I had borrowed from one of the officers for the occasion.

Beyond where the animal was quietly lying, in a western direction, the prairie rose very gradually for a mile—farther than that we knew nothing of the nature of the ground. Tom Hancock could creep closer to the smooth prairie and made less show than any man in the command—knew all the advantages of taking the wind, and was conversant with every species of strategy by which to make his game certain—but he still thought it more prudent to give the animal a shot when within a hundred and fifty yards than to run the risk of crawling nearer. He had desired us not to move unless the buffalo started, hoping to have another shot; we therefore sat quietly upon our horses to watch the effect of his first discharge.



The buffalo, evidently struck, though but slightly wounded, bounded from the ground, stretched himself as does the tame bull on first rising, whisked his tufted tail right and left, looked slowly and inquiringly about him, and then lay down again upon the ground. We did not stir, and Hancock quietly reloaded his rifle without rising from the prairie. Another shot now followed, and this time the huge animal again bounded up and lashed his tail; but no sooner had he turned his head in our direction, and discovered his enemies, than he wheeled and started off towards the west at the usual heavy, lumbering gallop. He had evidently been hit by the second shot as well as the first, and this time the wound was probably more severe.

At an easy canter our party now dashed off in pursuit, not putting our horses to their speed at first from fear of blowing them too early into a chase which we determined should last to the death. We kept on in company until we had neared the top of the first prairie roll; here, finding my horse in much the best condition, I left my companions, and at an increased speed continued the pursuit. I have said that the prairie was smooth; by this the reader, who has never seen one of these immense grassy plains, must not imagine an even, hard, and well-trod common, resembling the spot, mayhap, where in boyhood he has kicked football or joined in the many sports incidental to his earlier years; on the contrary, the smoothest of our Western prairies have an uneven surface, and are filled with the holes of the mole and the field-mouse. Through the slight thickness of the earth which covers these holes the feet of the horse frequently sink; and unless he has been brought up and trained on the prairies, he can never be taught to run upon them with that confidence which develops his full powers. When pursued, the buffalo chooses the roughest road he can find, and leads his pursuers down break-neck precipices, or up rough and broken steps, inaccessible to other feet than his. Clumsy as he really is, his headlong obstinacy frequently carries him through difficulties at which even the more active and well-trained steed recoils with terror, and which the latter might overcome with greater ease did he but dare attempt them. But to the chase.

On reaching the summit of the prairie roll, some little distance in advance of my companions, I discovered the buffalo still galloping heavily and clumsily along, about five hundred yards before me. The descent of the prairie was here so



gradual that I could see every object at least five miles distant, and the surface was much smoother than I had anticipated. I now put spurs to my horse, and dashed boldly down the gentle slope. Giving one look behind, I saw that one of my companions at the starting-place, Major Howard, had given up the chase, or rather his horse had given up. Lieutenant Lubbock and one of the men, the latter mounted on a mule which, if he could not get over the ground particularly fast, had at least the commendable quality of running all day, were still in hot pursuit.

The prairie, as I have said, was comparatively smooth; and although I could not spur my horse into his full, free, and open stride, I was soon up with the huge animal, which was now at his utmost speed. Occasionally, as if to rest his legs on one side, he would roll over on the other, changing from side to side as his weight would tire him. This roll of the body must have been noticed by all who have chased these animals, and is a peculiar gait which I believe belongs to the buffalo alone. The one I was chasing was a bull of the largest and most powerful frame, his bright, glaring eyeballs, peering out from his shaggy frontlet of hair, shewing plainly that he was maddened by his wounds and the close pursuit. It was with the greatest difficulty, so terrible was his aspect, that I could get my horse within twenty yards of him, and when I fired my first charge at that distance the ball did not take effect.

As the chase continued my horse came to his work more kindly, and soon appeared to take an interest in the exciting race; yet I was still unable to lay him up directly alongside the buffalo. I could approach him closely in the rear, but the affrighted steed sheered as soon as he lapped the mountain of scraggy hair and flesh. Finding it impossible to gain the position I so much wished, I dropped a few yards behind; then, by dashing my spurs furiously in his sides, I was enabled to bring my horse to charge upon the buffalo's quarters. As I neared the animal I raised my pistol, and when about passing him, in a diagonal line, fired at less than four yards' distance. The now infuriated buffalo shrank as the ball took effect just back of the long hair on his shoulders. Under such headway was I when I discharged my pistol that I was compelled to cut across directly in front of him and close to his head, and when safely on the opposite or right side I reined up and once more dropped behind for



another charge. Again I put spurs to their work, and, as I fairly flew by, gave the buffalo another wound directly in his side. He was now foaming with rage and pain. His eyes resembled two deep-red balls of fire—his tongue was out, and curling inwardly—while his long and tufted tail was either carried high aloft or lashed madly against his sides—a wild, and, at the same time, magnificent picture of desperation.

By this time my horse was almost completely subject to my guidance. He no longer pricked his ears with fear or sheered off as I approached the monster we were pursuing, but ran directly up so that I could almost touch the animal with my pistol. I had still two shots left in the repeater, and after discharging them I intended to fall back upon the old Harper's Ferry, and, by a well-directed shot, make a finish of the business.

After firing my third shot I again crossed the path of the buffalo, and so near that my right foot nearly touched his horns. The wound I had given caused him to spring suddenly forward, thus bringing me in too close a contact to be either pleasing or prudent. On coming up with him a fourth time, and so near that the muzzle of my pistol was not two yards from his side, the barrel dropped off just as I was about to pull the trigger. As I dashed by the infuriated animal, he vainly endeavoured to gore and overthrow my horse by suddenly turning his head and springing at me.

The chase was now up, so far as I was concerned, for the pistol was a borrowed one, and very valuable. I had checked my horse and dismounted to search for it, when Lieutenant Lubbock came up. His horse was completely broken down and unable to reach the buffalo—in the hurry and excitement I told him to mount mine immediately and continue the pursuit. Soon he was up with the buffalo. By this time, so kindly had the horse taken to his work, that his rider was able to fire every shot without once passing the wounded animal. The latter stuck the horse once with his left horn, but did not hurt him seriously.

The other pursuer with the mule still continued the chase, and as the pace of the buffalo slackened from loss of blood and weariness, the former gradually crept up. I stopped to gaze upon the exciting scene. Every minute or two a flash and smoke would be seen, and then the sharp report of the pistol would reach the spot where I stood.



In this way the chase was continued until Lieutenant L. had discharged his own arms, together with my holster pistols. He then pulled up, and the other pursuer mounted my horse and continued the chase. I could not help pitying the noble animal, which had by this time run at least six miles. In a very short time the new pursuer was up with the buffalo, and again I could see the smoke as each pistol was discharged; but by this time the space between us was too great for me to hear the reports. I gazed until both the pursued and pursuer were mere black specks upon the prairie, and never turned my eyes until they were completely lost in the distance.



## CHAPTER XII.

**The Buffalo brought to Bay.—Adventure with a Rattlesnake in the dark.—Buffalo found in the Morning.—Wolves in our Vicinity.—Encounter with a Drove of Mustangs.—Chances becoming Desperate.—Suffering and Starvation.—Mexican “Sign” seen.—Plum Patches.—Carlos and Brignoli seen.—The Texans driven to the greatest strait for Food.—Compelled to eat broken-down Horse-Flesh.—A cold, raw Night.—A Feast of Cat-fish.—Encounter with a Party of Mexicans.—Matias sent back to the Command.—Farther Sufferings of the Texans.—A Feast.—Mexican Shepherds and their Dogs.**

A SEARCH of brief duration enabled me to find the lost barrel of my pistol; and when this was accomplished I went back alone to seek the main body. After travelling a short distance, I met several of our men, who had previously been concealed by a slight roll of the prairie, and were now coming out, eager to learn our success. The last man who had taken up the pursuit of the buffalo with my horse was soon seen cantering back. Half an hour brought him up, when he informed us that after firing all his pistols he had brought the buffalo to bay, and that he had left him with the blood running from his mouth—a sure sign that he had received his death wound. I gave him Lieutenant Lubbock's horse, and with a small party he went back in search of the wounded buffalo.

I found my own horse completely white with foam, and much distressed after the long and exciting chase. Without mounting I trotted him briskly to the camp, distant about five miles, arrived there just at dark, and immediately commenced rubbing him violently with tufts of grass. Nobly had he sustained his part in our attempt to procure food, and I was anxious that he should not suffer after his severe, his killing race. While thus engaged, the heavens became suddenly overcast, and a distant roll of thunder warned me that we were to have another visitation of rain. I robbed myself of one of my blankets to favour the poor animal,



strapped it tightly upon his back, and set out to stake him fast before the rain commenced. I had a *lariat* about his neck, some twenty yards long, and attached to the other end was an iron spike, which, when driven its full length into the earth, could not be drawn out by a horizontal pull. By this time it was pitchy dark, and while I was in the act of stooping to thrust the spike into the ground with my right hand, a rattlesnake, of large size, judging from the sound of his rattles, struck me a violent blow immediately above the elbow, but fortunately without breaking the skin. It is needless to say that I left horse and everything, and took the longest kind of steps out of the neighbourhood—my feelings I will not pretend to describe. By the remains of a fire, which had now nearly gone out, I ascertained that I had received no scratch. I was dressed in a coarse Attakapas cottonade short jacket, under which I had a red flannel and a linen shirt. Through the folds of all these the fangs of the serpent had not penetrated, although at the time I should hardly have known it had the venomous reptile bitten my arm half off. I can conceive of nothing more startling than to find one's self suddenly in contact with a rattlesnake in the dark—the deadly sound of their alarm-notes is terrifying to a degree that sends the blood rushing to the heart, paralyzes the faculties, and strikes a cold tremour through the system with the suddenness of an electric shock.

The party who had gone out to look for the buffalo returned after dark, unsuccessful in their search. As the direction the animal had taken was well known, however, it was determined to send out a party early in the morning to hunt for him. We knew that he must be so badly wounded as to be past running; our hopes were that he had not died in the early part of the night and been devoured by wolves.

Frank Combs and myself were still bedfellows, doubling our scanty covering on the wet, cold nights, so as to render both more comfortable. I had now scarcely crawled under the blankets he had spread upon the ground, before the heavy drops which precede a prairie shower began falling, and before I had well tucked and nestled myself in a comfortable position a perfect avalanche of rain was pouring upon me. Every one of my readers who has taken a cold bath, must recollect the hesitation, the shrugs, the shiverings



and the chills with which he first entered the water—the difficulty of making up his mind to essay the dreaded plunge when he knows full well it is to be made: so it is with a bivouac upon the prairie during a heavy thunder shower. The unfortunate wight, who is destined to undergo a soaking, at first attempts to keep himself dry when his better sense teaches him that all efforts of the kind must prove unavailing. As the cold stream first penetrates his blanket, and trickles down his sides, he screws his body inward or outward to avoid the chilling current. Anon, another stream finds its way, then another, until finally he feels that farther attempts to stay the flood from without are useless, and he then stretches himself in as favourable a position as he can, and composes himself to that sleep which tired nature is sure to exact. The shower which fell, on the occasion to which I have just alluded, was among the heaviest of the heavy. The lightning lit up the prairie in every direction, and the darkness which succeeded each flash appeared to me of more than common blackness—thick and impenetrable—a wall of gloom. The wind, too, howled and moaned around us, and struck a cold chill through our scanty covering. Tired and faint, however, from want of food and the unusual fatigues of the day, wet and cold as I was, I soon fell asleep.

The next morning, while we were drying our blankets, a party went out in search of the buffalo, and with success. They found him badly wounded and unable to run, and a single well-directed ball completed at length our work of the previous evening. On taking off his hide, it was found that more than thirty balls had struck him. They were mostly small, however, and not one of them had touched a vital part, although he must have died during the day from the wounds. Every pound of his poor and tough flesh, for he was an old and lean bull, was brought into camp, and after it had been equally divided among the different messes, preparations were made for our immediate departure.

Our encampment was on the bank of a small ravine, bordered by a flank of low hackberry and other trees. It was almost the only place we had yet seen on the immense upper prairie where a sufficiency of wood could be found for cooking purposes, even had we been in possession of anything to cook; now that we had meat we were compelled



by circumstances to continue the march, hungry as wolves, and with the raw material for at least a full breakfast hanging at our saddle-skirts.

We had scarcely proceeded a mile before we encountered a narrow but deep gully, running nearly north and south, filled to the top with water. Having no certainty of finding a fording-place near, we dashed boldly in and swam safely across. The passage made, the journey was resumed, and briskly we scoured across the desolate prairie. We hurried rapidly on, with the hope that before nightfall we might discover either trees or bushes of some kind with which to cook our buffalo meat, but the sun went down, and with it all our prospects of having a well-dressed supper.

We gathered a few buffalo chips\*—excellent fuel when dry, and universally used for cooking purposes by all travellers upon the lone prairies—but in the present instance they had been made damp by the heavy night-showers, and it was with the greatest difficulty that we could ignite them at all. We made out, however, to *warm* our meat a little—I will not say that it was *cooked*—and voraciously did I swallow several pounds of the tough, unsavoury food.

That night, and for the first time since we had struck the grand prairie, we were serenaded by a pack of wolves, which skulked and howled for hours within a few yards of our outposts. The “sign” was considered highly favourable, as these animals are seldom found far from woods or settlements. An old backwoodsman remarked that we should find Indians, white people, or an end to the prairie, the next day.

On the following morning we made an early start, the prairie before us still presenting the same lone and dreary appearance. We had travelled but a few miles when a drove of horses, numbering some seventy-five, was discovered a short distance to our left. They were near enough for us to see plainly that they were horses, and if wild ones that they were uncommonly tame, while many of

\* This is the name given by Western traders to the immense quantity of buffalo ordure found scattered over the surface of the prairie. When dry and ignited it gives out a strong heat, emits little offensive smell, and answers the purpose of a wood fire very well. The hunter throws his meat upon the coals, or places it upon his gunstick and holds it over the fire—in either case it is well cooked.



our party asserted that they could see human beings among them, resting quietly upon the ground or moving about. Some even said that they could see mounted men in the extreme distance, as though driving in the *cavallada*; at all events the different surmises and assertions created an unwonted excitement among us. If our neighbours were only mustangs, it was an evidence that we were near the edge of the gloomy prairie, for those animals are seldom seen in large numbers far from mesquits and watercourses; if they were Indians, we might obtain some information from them, as they could hardly be Caygüas; and again, if they were Mexicans, and we really thought they were, then our journey might almost be considered at an end—we could obtain information of the nearest route to the settlements, and very likely a supply of provisions for immediate use. Our main party halted and formed, while three or four set off with the intention of taking a closer look at our neighbours. We hoisted a flag of truce, and a sorry flag it was. I was the owner and possessor of a handkerchief which, in its better days, had been white. It was now a miserable whity brown; but at the same time it came nearer a peaceful colour than anything we had and was accordingly hoisted upon a ramrod and held aloft. As we gradually approached, there appeared to be no little commotion among the animals—a running hither and thither, as is the custom with wild horses. We had noticed three or four white spots among them, which, in the distance, we had taken for flags; a nearer approach convinced some of us that these spots were young colts. With this impression we returned to the main body, but even up to this time I more than half believe that they were tame animals, and that human beings were moving among them. Had we proceeded a short half mile farther towards them all doubts would have been set at rest, and possibly we might have saved ourselves many miles of weary travel, and many hours of starvation.\*

About the middle of the day, and some ten miles from the place where we had seen the horses, the deep-blue tops of a range of mountains were discerned, which, as we

\* We afterward met with a party of Mexicans who said that, while encamped, they had seen us upon the great prairie, and that from our actions they thought we were about to approach them. Perhaps this was the same party.



journeyed on, soon more plainly developed themselves. It may be readily conceived that this was a joyful sight to all. We had now been seven days upon the prairie, averaging at least thirty miles a day, and many began to despair of ever getting off the dreary waste. There was now a prospect of a change, and any change, we then thought, would be for the better.

We continued on until near three o'clock, when suddenly a beautiful valley, studded here and there with a clump of trees, appeared in sight. To the north, in the distance, there was every appearance of a large stream of water, and that, in our fond anticipations, we put down as the long-sought-for Red River. A halt was called in a pleasant little grove of cotton-woods, through which a small stream of fresh water was gently purling, and here we built a large fire of wood from a dry and fallen tree, cooked what was left of our tough buffalo meat, and dried our wet blankets and clothing. Two hours were spent at this comfortable camping-ground, after which we mounted and pursued our uncertain journey. Unable to continue our old course, northwest, on account of deep and abrupt ravines to the northward, we travelled west this afternoon, through narrow valleys, encircled by high, conical, and singularly-formed hills. At sundown we reached a small spring among these hills, where we bivouacked at once. During this night there was a panic and half stampede among our animals, caused, in the opinion of the guard, by the appearance of a small drove of mustangs on the steep hills which overlooked our encampment.

Resuming the march early on the following morning, we soon became entangled among high, steep, and rugged hills, the passage over which was almost impossible. Such was the nature of this singular piece of country, that we were compelled, although reluctantly, to abandon entirely the course we had so long travelled, and seek an outlet from the hills in a direction south of west. We were all anxious to visit the river on our right, to note its general appearance, taste its waters, and form some opinion as to the probabilities of its being Red River; but as well might we have undertaken the task of climbing the largest cotton-wood upon its banks on horseback, as that of cutting our way through the natural obstacles which intervened between us and the stream. But go on in some direction we must; and, as there was no alternative, we set off in a southwest course—



the nearest point we could possibly make to what was considered the right one.

Even the country over which we were now compelled to travel, much as it threw us off our course, was exceedingly rough, and for the sake of our poor horses at least, we wished ourselves back upon the smooth and open prairie. Many of their shoes were torn off by the rocks, and, unused to go without them, their feet became so tender and sore that they could not move without difficulty. To this should be added our own catalogue of misfortunes—travelling, day after day, while enduring the sharpest pangs of hunger, and in a state of harassing uncertainty as to our present situation, even more annoying than the starvation—with all these hardships to undergo, the reader can easily imagine that our chances were becoming desperate. We saw numbers of antelope and deer during the day, and passed through one or two prairie dog towns situated deep in the narrow and secluded valleys; the animals were all so shy, however, that it was impossible to get a shot at them. The prairie dogs, in particular, appeared to shun us with more than their ordinary prudence—giving their short yelps of alarm before we were within half a mile of them, then tumbling hurriedly into their holes, and not once shewing their heads so long as we were in sight. At night we encamped at another spring among the hills, without having tasted food since our scanty meal of buffalo meat on the preceding day. We tightened our belts by taking up still another hole—a great relief when suffering from want of food—and then threw ourselves upon the ground to seek forgetfulness in sleep.

We made another early start on the following morning, winding our way among rough and steep hills, and slowly nearing the chain of mountains west of us. About the middle of the afternoon—it was the 8th of September; I can never forget the date—we got clear of the hills, and entered a narrow but fertile valley running nearly east and west. A light fringing of trees in advance convinced us that the valley was watered by a stream larger than any we had recently met with, and with excited feelings we pressed our jaded animals forward. Our anticipations of finding a fresh-water stream were more than realized—we came suddenly upon the banks of a beautiful river of most delicious water, running over a bed of yellow sand, and so low that we forded it with ease. In the vicinity we found stumps of trees which



had evidently been cut down by the Mexicans. Remnants of old cart-standards and wheels were also discovered : proof conclusive that the place had been visited by other than Indians. With gladdened hearts we scanned these evidences of civilization, and even the keen cravings of hunger were for the moment forgotten in the anticipation of soon reaching the settlements.

All was now inquiry and speculation as to the name of the stream we were upon. Some of our men, and they the wisest, too, contended that we had either crossed or headed Red River, and that we were now upon one of the southern forks of the Canadian. Others, again, said that if there were any such stream as Red River above the lower or middle prairies, this must be it, although its waters were entirely dissimilar in all respects to what existed in our received opinions as the general features and appearance of that stream. Then there were two or three men among us, old trappers and traders who had visited Santa Fé by way of St. Louis, who said that we were upon the Mora, and but a few miles from San Miguel. Of course, nothing certain can be known ; but the more probable conjecture is, that we were now upon the waters of the Arkansas, and that we had headed the Red River of the United States. This cuts off some two or three hundred miles from the length of the latter stream, as laid down upon a majority of the maps ; but I am inclined to believe that it deserves this abbreviation.

If the Red River of the United States rise in the Rocky Mountains—the reader will bear in mind that I say *if*—how and where does it make its descent, from the high table-lands which form the base of those eminences, to the prairies beneath the main western steppe ? The descent can hardly be gradual, but, on the contrary, the stream must tumble, in some places, hundreds of feet down the eminences which the traveller is obliged to ascend as he journeys westward from the Cross Timbers. These steppes grow higher and more abrupt as they extend to the south, after leaving the valleys of the Canadian and Arkansas ; in fact, I do not know that they extend north of the southern fork of the Canadian at all.

The New Mexicans have a Red River, rising in the mountains north of Santa Fé, but this is known to be but a branch of the Canadian. Farther south rises the Mora ; this is another stream finding its way to the Canadian, and at this, although by this time the name may have been changed,



I have little doubt we had now arrived. Its waters are as unlike those of the Red River as are those of the Croton unlike the Mississippi. A majority of the map-makers, by joining the Red River as far as known with some one of the rivers rising in the Rocky Mountains, have made a long and very pretty stream, as seen upon their charts; were they to journey along the line of their imaginary river, with the hope of finding the water they have traced, I am inclined to believe they would suffer much from thirst before they had crossed the boundless prairie spreading eastward from the outer spurs of the Rocky Mountains.

Not to tire my reader much farther with speculations in relation to Red River, I will here state my belief that it takes its rise at the base of the high steppe I have so often alluded to, and but a few miles north of the head waters of the Brazos and Colorado of Texas. On its southern side it receives the waters of the Quintufue and Palo Duro, rising from the sides of the high steppe,\* with other short but wide streams, which in spring contain much water. We crossed them during the dry season, and at a time when their beds contained but little, and that blackish and standing in sluggish pools. Southeast of the steppe, at a distance of perhaps seventy-five miles, rises the Wichita, which, after running a course a little north of east, empties into the Red River some fifty or seventy miles west of the Cross Timbers. It may be recollected that in a previous chapter, and prior to the departure of Carlos, we had noticed a large stream south of the Wichita, and running nearly parallel; that was undoubtedly the red fork of the Brazos.

It is certainly not a little amusing to examine the Red River of the different maps, and trace its most singular windings. On several of the maps now before me, I see that it rises north of Santa Fé, near latitude  $38^{\circ}$  north, and in longitude varying from  $104$  to  $106^{\circ}$  west of Greenwich. On one of these maps its general course, for some five hundred miles, is southwest; on another it only runs some three hundred in that direction, and then strikes off across the prairies north of east. The most correctly-laid-down course

\* The Mexicans, who started with Albert Pike in his journey across the prairies, spoke of this steppe, and gave the name of *Las Cejas*, or the Eyebrows, to the singular range. Mr. P. appears to have passed to the south of the steppe, his Mexican companions returning before he reached the Brazos.



of the stream, on any of the charts I have examined, may be found on Tanner's map of Mexico; but there it is somewhat too long, although the general eastern course he has given it, is in the main correct. But I must leave speculation, and return to the watercourse we had by this time reached.

Our little party remained some half hour upon the banks of the stream, considering which route to pursue. The general course of the river, as I have before stated, was a little north of east, and to follow it up was finally decided upon. We proceeded along its northern banks, as that side afforded the best travelling, until dark, when we encamped in a copse of cotton-woods. A dreary, rainy night, was followed by a day so cloudy that we could not steer a course; yet there was the river acting as guide, and we followed it. At times we were close in upon the narrow, but fertile valley, which skirted its borders; at others, some long bend in the stream would throw us out upon a succession of low, barren, sand-hills, with little other vegetation gracing their sides than dwarf thorn, prickly pear, or plum bushes. The latter were not more than eighteen inches high, yet they appeared to thrive luxuriantly in the sand, and when we were among them, they were loaded with plums of the largest size, and such as were ripe were of delicious flavour. Ripe, or unripe, however, the bushes were stripped by our famished men, the fruit filling their stomachs for the time, but yielding no real nourishment. Some of the half-dried plums we found in the sand tasted like prunes. During the day we also found large quantities of small, but well-flavoured grapes, which were devoured with an avidity that told our sufferings. It was on this day that our runaway guide, Carlos, was seen by two of our men, who were out some distance from the main body, in search of plums. He was still in company with the Italian—Brignoli, and both said that they had been lost, and half starved from the hour when they left us, at the same time begging earnestly for provisions. Their worn and haggard aspect told more forcibly than words that they had endured suffering the most intense. As they promised to come into our camp at night, our men left them without asking many questions, but they never came. Carlos, probably, feared that we might shoot him, and for that reason kept out of our way. Had any of our horses been in condition, the fugitives would probably have been pursued, and brought in—as it was, we saw no more of them, until after we were taken prisoners.



From after circumstances I have little doubt that Carlos now knew where he was, but he was undoubtedly ignorant on that point, and lost, at the time when he left us. The fellow had trapped up and down the innumerable water-courses of the lower prairies, without knowing the name of one of them, else how could he direct our men to plum-patches, and springs, a long distance in advance, and invariably with accuracy? On arriving at the stream of fresh water, which he called the Utau, he doubtless saw signs and landmarks closely resembling the features of a stream called by that name, which really exists but a few days' ride from Santa Fé. As he guided us onward, in the course of some three or four days, he found that he had not only deceived himself, but the command, and his fear of punishment induced him to leave us at the earliest opportunity that offered.

On the 10th of September, the day following that on which our whilom guide had been seen, we found what appeared to be an old cart road, and also a deserted Mexican camp. The road we followed until it was lost upon a sandy prairie destitute of vegetation. This day, three mountains were discovered in a southwest direction, and some fifteen miles distant, which bore the strongest resemblance to the description Carlos had often given us of *The Crows*. It seemed, too, as though we could discover a passage through the chain of smaller hills north of them—an opening resembling the *Angosturas* I have often before mentioned—but we had been so often deceived that few of us could now anticipate any such good fortune.

In the mean time, our men were driven nearly to desperation by hunger. Little or no order could be preserved by the officers, the volunteers scattering about in every direction, hunting for plums, grapes, and such game as might fall in their way. Few deer or antelope were seen, and they were so shy that it was impossible to shoot them; but in place of them every tortoise and snake, every living and creeping thing was seized upon and swallowed by our famishing men with a rapacity that nothing but the direst hunger could induce. Occasionally a skunk or polecat would reward some one more fortunate than the rest; but seven out of every ten of us were compelled to journey on without a morsel of anything to appease our sufferings.

One amusing little anecdote I will here relate, to shew



in the first place, the direful straits to which our men were driven, and in the second to give my readers an insight into the trickery of old campaigners. We had reached a camping ground late one evening, where a sufficiency of wood was found to kindle good, substantial fires. While a knot of us were reclining around one of the fires, speculating as to our prospects, a youngster brought in a spotted back land tortoise, alive and kicking, which he had been fortunate enough to find upon the prairie. Throwing it upon the ground, and placing the end of his rifle upon the back of the animal to prevent its crawling off, he next asked an old hunter how to cook his prize. The answer was, that he must open the coals and throw the tortoise in, cover it over and allow it to remain for at least half an hour in the fire—a longer time would only serve to make the repast more savoury.

No sooner said than done; for in less than a minute the unfortunate tortoise was roasting alive beneath a bushel of coals. The countenance of the young man was lit with joy in anticipation of a meal, which, although at any other time it would have been revolting, he now coveted, with that longing which starvation only can create. But it was a meal he was not destined to enjoy. The old campaigner, after telling him three or four times that his supper was not cooked, finally found means to withdraw the youngster's attention from the coals, and then to whip the animal out with his iron ramrod was but the work of a moment. Another moment, and the well-roasted terrapin was safe behind the back of the more elderly ranger, and where the youngster could not see it.

"Don't you think he's nearly done?" inquired the latter, now turning his head and looking wistfully at the fast-expiring bed of coals.

"Pretty well cooked by this time—you can take him out," retorted the old borderer, while he quietly watched the first speaker as he eagerly raked open the embers.

The movements of the youngster, as he first commenced opening the coals, were slow and decided: by-and-by, as he neared the bottom of the moulding heap, his action grew excited and hurried. The expression of his countenance may be easier imagined than described, as, after having dug to the hard ground itself, he turned to the author of his



misfortune, and in utter ignorance of the trick, exclaimed, *He's gone!*"

"Gone!" slowly repeated the veteran borderer: "was he alive when you threw him in the fire?"

"Certainly—why?"

"*Why!*"

"Yes, *why?*"

"Because," continued the ranger, "you must have thought the terrapin mightily troubled with the simples if you supposed he would stay in the fire and be roasted alive, when he could easily crawl out and make tracks off!"

Gloomily the youngster dragged himself to his blanket supperless, while the old trickster quietly wended his way to a neighbouring fire to pick the scanty meat from his ill-got prize, and chuckle at his success in "doing" the green-horn out of his supper. To return to my narrative.

The road we had found and followed some distance in the morning we hunted for in vain in the afternoon: all the old wheel-marks had lost themselves in a barren, gravelly prairie. That we must find a passage through or over the mountains before us was considered certain, but where that passage was, no one could imagine. We were far from being aware of it at the time, but they proved to be outer and eastern spurs of the Rocky Mountains. As the sun gradually sank behind their lofty and ragged summits, a raw chill breeze sprang up from the neighbourhood. It was the first cold weather we had experienced, and in our weak and exhausted condition the biting wind seemed to pierce directly through us.

We continued our march until we reached the dry bed of a mountain stream, upon the banks of which we encamped for the night. A flock of wild turkeys had taken shelter under the banks, running off as we approached their roost. Although contrary to strict orders, nothing could restrain our men from banging and blazing away at the turkeys as they sped across the prairie—fifty rifles and muskets being discharged at them before they were out of sight. Two or three only were killed by the volley and running fire which ensued, and they were but half grown, and so extremely poor that they did not furnish a meal for half a dozen men. To go farther without *something* to eat was now deemed impossible—the wild and haggard expression, the sunken eyes,



and sallow, fleshless faces of the men too plainly shewed that some means of sustenance must be speedily provided. A horse formerly belonging to Howland, which in the early part of the campaign had been one of the best animals in the command, was now found to be so poor and badly broken down that it was resolved to shoot him and divide his flesh among the different messes. As they led the once proud and gallant animal to execution, the words of an old nursery song came fresh to my mind—one that I had neither heard nor thought of for many, many years. The burden of the ballad was,

“ Poor old horse ! he must die ! ”

and I have only mentioned the circumstance to illustrate the well-known eccentricities of memory. A man is often placed in situations and becomes a witness of scenes which suddenly awaken and bring back the long-forgotten associations of his childhood.

But to return to the actual. The horse was killed, and in less time than it takes me to tell it, his hide was off and his flesh distributed. I have before said that the flesh of a young mustang is excellent—but that of an old, broken-down horse is quite another affair. It was tough as India-rubber, and the more a piece of it was masticated the larger it became in the mouth. Poor as it was, however, and hard to swallow, I am confident that many a man in the party ate four or five pounds of it, half cooked and without salt—I know that I devoured my share. That I lost some of the good opinion I entertained of myself while eating this food I will not pretend to deny, and even a buzzard, that sat perched upon a dry limb of a cotton-wood overhead, appeared to look down upon us reproachfully as he saw us appropriating food that legitimately belonged to him. There was something, too, like honest indignation expressed in the countenance of a wolf, which sat quietly watching our operations from the adjoining prairie; but at the time we were hungry enough to make a meal even of him had he fallen into our hands. A man never knows what he will eat until driven by a week's starvation.

Our tough and most unsavoury meal over, we spread our blankets in the ravine, where we could be partially protected from the biting northeast wind; but the cutting blasts found their way through our scanty coverings, chilling our weakened frames to such a degree as almost entirely to prevent sleep.



With the ordinary stock of flesh and blood we should have been far better able to withstand the bitter wind; as it was, we could only shrug and shake, and pass a sleepless night.

Weak and unrefreshed we arose in the morning—breakfastless and desponding, we mounted our horses, and once more resumed our gloomy march. Our course was southwest, and in the direction of what appeared to be a passage through the mountains; but after travelling some six or eight miles we found our farther progress cut off by high and precipitous ascents. To return was our only alternative, and at noon we again found ourselves near the point whence we had started in the morning.

A consultation was now held as to our future course. Running directly north was a high chain of mountains, extending as far as the eye could reach, and many contended that our best course would be to travel along the base of this chain until we either found a passage through or met with the trail of the St. Louis traders. Others, again, thought our wisest and safest plan would be to attempt crossing directly over the mountains where we then were, laborious as was the prospect. The latter party prevailed, and the attempt to cross was immediately made.

After incredible fatigue to both horses and men, for we were obliged to dismount and carry our arms and baggage in our hands, the ascent was finally achieved. Arrived at the summit, a beautiful prospect was before us. Below a peaceful and lovely valley was spread out, through the centre of which the large stream we had left the previous day wound along. Innumerable brooks, taking their rise in the mountains around, meandered through this valley, and finally found their way to the larger stream. Their immediate borders were fringed with small trees and bushes of the deepest green, while the banks of the river were skirted with a narrow belt of timber of larger and more luxuriant growth. The valley was hemmed in on all sides by mountains, whose frowning and precipitous fronts appeared to offer impassable barriers against all approach to the tranquil and beautiful scene lying ~~at~~ below us. At another time these ragged and dangerous steeples might have stayed our farther advance; but now, after allowing our poor and foot-sore animals a short rest, we drove them down, and in less than an hour found ourselves safe in the valley. It was now discovered that two of our men were missing, unable, probably, from their own weakness and the



jaded condition of their horses, to keep up with the main body. We could only hope that they might be able to follow our trail and overtake us at our encampment—it was impossible, so weak and lame were all our horses, to go back in search of them.

On reaching the timber of the river banks we immediately encamped, and turned our animals loose to graze and rest themselves after their fatiguing mountain march. The river was found to abound with catfish, and as we had several hooks and lines with us, a sufficient number were caught to give us all a meal. I should perhaps call it a feast; for even without salt or seasoning of any kind, many of our men ate pound after pound of the coarse fish with a relish which a gouty alderman might covet, but could never enjoy over the best bowl of turtle soup the ingenuity of man ever compounded.

Sunset in this secluded valley presented a scene of almost unrivalled magnificence, as well as of mild and heavenly beauty. The tops of the surrounding mountains, upon which the blue vault of heaven seemed to rest, were gilded by the sun's last and most brilliant rays, while the deep-black shadows, as some beam of sunlight would dance around and kiss for the last time a more towering summit, would course hurriedly down the frowning mountain sides, as if to find their homes in the depths below ere darkness assumed her sway. A soothing, and ethereal quiet reigned throughout the valley, broken only by the evening hymn of some turtle-dove, vowing anew her constancy to her mate, or by the last bark of the squirrel, as, with light buoyant leaps, he wended his way from the river to his nest among the mountain cliffs. By-and-by a brood of wild turkeys, which had been hunting for their supper at the base of the rocky steeps, flew over our heads and sought their roost in a large cotton-wood which overhung the river. The sharp crack of a rifle soon announced the doom of one of the flock, while the report, taken up by a thousand echoes, reverberated from grot and glen, from steep hillside and quiet dell, until lost to the ear in distance. Night had thrown her sable mantle, alike over the valley and the recently-gilded mountain tops, before I could turn from the contemplation of the lovely scene.

Early the next morning, Mr. Hunt, our guide, set off, in company with Captain Sutton, in search of a passage through the mountains, which would lead us along the river banks.



They returned in two or three hours with the joyful intelligence that they had discovered an excellent route in a western direction, one which would extricate us from our present dilemma without much labour. To saddle and mount our horses was a work of but few moments, and then, with hearts much lightened, we resumed our journey.

After crossing the river, and emerging from the timber which lined the banks, we entered the narrow but open valley that had been concealed from view by a projecting point of one of the mountains. Two hours' ride brought us into a road which had evidently been used for carts, as we found yoke-keys, standards, and other trappings belonging to a Mexican vehicle, scattered along its sides. On either hand, the frowning and rocky sides of mountains rose high above us, and we now knew and felt that we were in the *Angosturas*, or Narrows of the river so often spoken of by Carlos, where the stream has forced its passage through the eastern spur of the Rocky Mountains. Well do these mountains deserve their name, for they are nothing but immense heaps of stones, irregularly piled up, while but little vegetation is to be found upon their sides save a few stunted pines and cedars.

For three or four miles, after first entering the *Angosturas*, our road was along a solid ledge of rocks, the river on our right, and running nearly east and west. The greatest width of the pass through which the stream runs, until the traveller leaves the rocky road, cannot be more than half a mile, while the towering fronts of the mountains on either side are so steep that even a goat would find much difficulty in climbing them. On leaving the ledge of rocks the pass grows gradually wider, and the road becomes sandy. We had no sooner struck the latter than the tracks of mules and asses were plainly visible. A little farther on, the footprints of men were also seen, and from every appearance they had been made but a few hours. Not a sign of a human habitation had we discovered, either in the beautiful valley where we had spent the previous night or along the road we were now travelling, but that we had at length reached an open highway and were close upon a party of Mexicans was evident enough.

With feelings the most joyful we now spurred our animals briskly forward. The sagacious brutes themselves seemed to know that they were near the end of their long and tire-



some journey, for they pricked up their ears and willingly responded to our call upon them for a faster pace. Gradually the Narrows became wider, the road grew smoother, and just as the sun was losing itself behind the western mountains we came up with the Mexicans, encamped at the mouth of the gorge at which the river enters the Angosturas. As Carlos had always told us, the river at this point turns immediately north, watering a narrow and fertile valley.

Those of my readers who have ever made a long sea voyage may remember how eagerly, at the approach of its termination, when the pilot first placed his foot upon deck, they crowded around and pressed him with idle questions innumerable: so with us, in coming up with these strangers. Every one among us, who could speak a word of Spanish, earnestly showered upon the ragged, swarthy, and half-frightened Mexicans volumes of interrogations, without giving them time to answer one of them, even had they been able or willing. The fellows were just returning, with a small drove of broken-down mules and donkeys, from a trading trip of some two months' duration among the Caygüas and Camanches. They frankly told us, as soon as we gave them time to breathe and collect the little scattering sense they had, that they had seen us early in the morning, and that such of their companions as were better mounted had instantly fled, in fear that we might rob them.

In answer to the question as to the state of feeling in New Mexico regarding our approach, they could give us no information—upon this point they knew nothing. They had been absent months from the settlements, and were trading with the Caygüas when the unfortunate Hull and his party were killed, although they had no part or lot in that massacre. They also told us that they were in the main camp of the Indians when the murdering party returned, bringing the dead bodies of eleven of their warriors, among whom was a principal chief. The ceremonies and performances on the occasion—the wild dances of the warriors around the scalps of their victims, with the painful penance of the women in token of their grief for the loss of the warriors of the tribe—were described by our new acquaintances with graphic effect. The women smote and cut their breasts, and ran naked through thorns and prickly pear-bushes, to shew the intensity of their affection.



We next asked the Mexicans the distance to the Palo Duro, or rather to the spot where our main body with the wagons were encamped. They said that a good mule could travel the distance easily in four days. Upon our telling them the route we had taken, and that we had been thirteen days on the road, they expressed the greatest astonishment—said it was wonderful that we had been able to cross the immense chasms and mountains at all. They said that if we had taken a course directly west, on starting, we should have avoided the deep canons altogether, and had a good, smooth road the whole distance. In addition, they informed us that Carlos and his companion had passed them in the morning, completely worn down by hunger and fatigue. By this it would seem that the runaway guide had taken a course too much to the north, and fallen into the same errors which had caused us so much trouble.

As regards provisions, the Mexicans were almost as badly off as ourselves, their stock being nearly exhausted. They gave the mess to which I was attached, however, a small quantity of barley meal; just enough for a taste, and that was all. They said that San Miguel was still some seventy or eighty miles distant, but before reaching it we should fall in with large herds of sheep, and also the little village of Anton Chico. At the latter place we could procure *tortillas* and *atole*; the former a species of thin cake in universal use throughout Mexico, and the latter a thin mush, made of meal and water or cow's or goat's milk, and also a standing dish of the country. Anything, but more especially any preparation of meal or flour, would have been as welcome to us as manna was to the suffering Israelites in the wilderness.

The next morning, three of the Mexicans were hired to go back to our companions, one of our Mexican servants, Matias, disguised completely, so that he might not be suspected by any Indians they should meet on the route, accompanying them. They were provided with the best and least jaded mules we had, and took with them a package of letters to General McLeod. The purport of those letters was, that we had arrived within two or three days' ride of the settlements, and that the best course the command could pursue would be to march immediately, under direction of the guides, towards San Miguel. The Mexicans, after receiving full instructions from Colonel Cooke and Doctor Brenham, set



out on their journey across the immense prairie, and, as we afterward learned, were less than four days in going a distance which had occupied us thirteen!

Shortly after Matias and his three companions had left us, we resumed our march towards San Miguel. Not a morsel of food did we have during the day, and at night we encamped, supperless, on the banks of a small creek emptying into the Rio Mora. On this stream, the Mexicans, who had thus far accompanied us, had their places of residence. After giving us instructions for our route towards San Miguel, they left us on the ensuing morning for their homes in the mountains.

Before we set out, our commander dispatched four of our best-mounted men, in advance to make arrangements for provisions, while the rest of us followed as fast as our weary animals could travel. As we neared the point where we knew that food could be procured in abundance, not only our hunger, but our impatience increased. During the day, I was fortunate enough, in company with the madcap Fitzgerald, to find half a hatful of wild parsley, and this we swallowed raw with the greatest avidity.

About the middle of the afternoon, one of the four who had been sent forward returned with the joyful intelligence that they had fallen in with a herd of no less than seventeen thousand sheep, and had succeeded in purchasing a sufficiency for the whole command. Again we put spurs to our horses, and a ride of half an hour brought us up with the shepherds and their charge, and to a fine camping-ground on the Rio Gallinas.

Here a scene of feasting ensued which beggars description. We had been thirteen days upon the road, with really not provisions enough for three, and now that there was an abundance, our starving men at once abandoned themselves to eating—perhaps I should rather call it gormandizing or stuffing. No less than twenty large, fat sheep had been purchased and dressed, and every ramrod, as well as every stick that could be found, was soon graced with smoking ribs and shoulders, livers and hearts. Many made themselves sick by over eating; but an attempt to restrain the appetites of half-starved men, except by main force, would be the very extreme of folly. Had the food been anything but mutton, and had we not procured an ample supply of



salt from the Mexicans to season it, our men might have died of the surfeit.

I have never yet seen a treatise or dissertation upon starving to death—I can speak *feelingly* of nearly every stage except the last. For the first two days through which a strong and healthy man is doomed to exist upon nothing, his sufferings are, perhaps, more acute than in the remaining stages—he feels an inordinate, unappeasable craving at the stomach, night and day. The mind runs upon beef, bread, and other substantials; but still, in a great measure, the body retains its strength. On the third and fourth days, but especially on the fourth, this incessant craving gives place to a sinking and weakness of the stomach, accompanied by nausea. The unfortunate sufferer still desires food, but with loss of strength he loses that eager craving which is felt in the earlier stages. Should he chance to obtain a morsel or two of food, as was occasionally the case with us, he swallows it with a wolfish avidity; but five minutes afterward his sufferings are more intense than ever. He feels as if he had swallowed a living lobster, which is clawing and feeding upon the very foundation of his existence. On the fifth day his cheeks suddenly appear hollow and sunken, his body attenuated, his colour an ashy pale, and his eye wild, glassy, cannibalish. The different parts of the system now war with each other. The stomach calls upon the legs to go with it in quest of food: the legs, from very weakness, refuse. The sixth day brings with it increased suffering, although the pangs of hunger are lost in an overpowering langour and sickness. The head becomes giddy—the ghosts of well-remembered dinners pass in hideous procession through the mind. The seventh day comes, bringing increased lassitude and farther prostration of strength. The arms hang listlessly, the legs drag heavily. The desire for food is still left, to a degree, but it must be brought, not sought. The miserable remnant of life which still hangs to the sufferer is a burden almost too grievous to be borne; yet his inherent love of existence induces a desire still to preserve it, if it can be saved without a tax upon bodily exertion. The mind wanders. At one moment he thinks his weary limbs cannot sustain him a mile—the next, he is endowed with unnatural strength, and if there be a certainty of relief before him, dashes bravely and



strongly onward, wondering whence proceeds this new and sudden impulse.

Farther than this my experience runneth not. The reader may think I have drawn a fancy sketch—that I have coloured the picture too highly; now, while I sincerely trust he may never be in a situation to test its truth from actual experience, I would in all sober seriousness say to him, that many of the sensations I have just described I have myself experienced, and so did the ninety-and-eight persons who were with me from the time when we first entered the grand prairie until we reached the flock of sheep, to which more pleasing subject I will now return.

There were very few men with the immense herd, but in their stead were a large number of noble dogs, which appeared to be peculiarly gifted with the faculty of keeping them together. There was no running about, no barking or biting in their system of tactics; on the contrary, they were continually walking up and down, like faithful sentinels, on the outer side of the flock, and should any sheep chance to stray from his fellows the dog on duty at that particular post would walk gently up, take him carefully by the ear, and lead him back to the fold. Not the least fear did the sheep manifest at the approach of these dogs; and there was no occasion for it. They appeared to me to be of mongrel breed, somewhat resembling, perhaps, a cross of the Newfoundland or St. Bernard species with the larger mastiff. They possessed mild, frank, and open countenances, were indefatigable in protecting their charge from wolves, and from what I could learn were extremely sagacious.

The shepherds had crooks in their hands, instruments I have often read of in poets' lays. The uses to which they were put took away much of the romance I had associated with crooks and gentle shepherds. One of the latter, whenever a sheep has been pointed out in the flock, either to be killed or for sale, thrusts the long hooked stick immediately under the throat of the victim, and holds it fast until its fellows have been driven past on either side. The sheep is then secured by grappling its wool with the hand—an operation, from first to last, partaking more of the practical than of the poetic.

Now that we had found provisions in plenty, we considered the dangers, the fatigues, the delays, and the vexations



of the march as over, and bright were the anticipations of the future. Every face was animated with joy, every heart was filled with gladness. How different would have been our feelings had we known the sufferings and privations, the indignities, and the cruel maltreatment we were yet to endure—the terrible fate that was awaiting us!



## CHAPTER XIII.

Party sent to the Settlements.—News respecting Howland and his Companions.—Encounter with Mexican Muleteers.—Arrival at Anton Chico.—Scanty Raiment of the Women.—A Night at Anton Chico.—A Suspicious Visitor.—Report that we were to be Arrested.—Start again from Anton Chico.—Arrival at Cuesta.—Our Party surrounded by Mexican Troops.—Apparent Frankness of their Leader, Dimasio Salezar.—Mexican Duplicity.—Prompt Interference of Vigil in saving our Lives.—We marched towards San Miguel.—Kindness of the Women.—Puertecito.—Arrival at San Miguel.—Meanness of the Alcalde and Kindness of the Priest.—Our first Night in Prison.

THE morning after our feast we made another hearty meal of broiled mutton, with *atole con leche*, a mush compounded of flour and goats' milk. The Mexican shepherds, finding the Texans excellent customers, and disposed to pay the highest prices for anything in the shape of bread, had sent to their *rancho*, or farm, during the night, a distance of some twelve miles, and supplied themselves abundantly with flour.

It was now determined, by our principal officers, to send two men forward to the frontier town of San Miguel, for the purpose of conferring with the authorities. W. P. Lewis, captain of the artillery company, and George Van Ness, secretary of the commissioners, were detailed for this service. Both could speak Spanish, and the former enjoyed in every way the confidence of Colonel Cooke, who had often befriended him. In addition to verbal instructions, the young men were intrusted with letters to the *alcalde*, or principal officer of San Miguel, and both the instructions and letters set forth that a large trading party of Texans was now approaching, that their intentions were in every way pacific, and that the leaders of the advance party were anxious to purchase a large quantity of provisions, to be sent back to the main command. Several of General



Lamar's proclamations were also given to Mr. Van Ness, to be distributed among the principal citizens, the purport of which was that the expedition was sent for the purpose of trading, and that if the inhabitants of New Mexico were not disposed to join, peacefully, the Texan standard, the expedition was to retire immediately. These proclamations were printed in both English and Spanish, and not a doubt existed that the liberal terms offered would be at once acceded to by a population living within the limits of Texas, and who had long been groaning under a misrule the most tyrannical.

At the request of Colonel Cooke and Dr. Brenham, two of the principal merchants, Major Howard and Mr. Fitzgerald, accompanied Lewis and Van Ness, and as I was in great haste to prosecute my journey through Mexico, I gathered all my effects, packed them in leather paniers made for the purpose, placed them upon my mule, and set off in company. This was on the 14th of September, and when I parted with my friends I certainly did not expect to see them for the first time in the April following, at the city of Mexico and in chains.

The shepherds from whom we had purchased our provisions had informed us that the country was in arms against us, that Howland and his party were prisoners at Santa Fé, and that an American named Rowland, a merchant at San Miguel, had also been imprisoned and his goods confiscated by order of the governor, Armijo. Yet they told these stories in so many different ways, and contradicted themselves so often in the telling, that but little confidence could be placed in them.

After having obtained directions as to our course towards the *camino real*, or principal road, for our camp on the Rio Gallinas was some distance from it, we proceeded on our way, a Mexican servant we had hired at San Antonio, named Manuel,\* accompanying us. After reaching the main road, we journeyed briskly forward until nearly two o'clock. An abrupt turn now brought us suddenly upon two Mexican muleteers, enjoying a quiet siesta, while thei

\* Manuel was shot a short time afterward in mere wantonness by a drummer in Armijo's redoubtable army. His leading characteristics were great good nature, extreme idleness, and a proneness to telling the most outrageous falsehoods—the two latter very common failings with his countrymen.



mules were feeding close by them. Our appearance frightened them exceedingly, and as they quickly caught their mules and commenced putting on their packs, their extreme nervousness was plainly visible. The colour entirely left the swarthy face of one of these fellows, who, for once, certainly had the appearance of a white man; and as his trembling hands were flying about from one part of his mule to another, fastening the packs, the movements could not have been more rapid had he been executing the Battle of Prague or one of Strauss's quickest and most difficult waltzes on a piano. At first he could not answer a question coherently; but as he gradually found that our intentions were not to eat him up alive, the color returned to his cheeks, his tongue became loosened, and he was able to give us satisfactory answers.

The fellow said that our approach was well known to the inhabitants, and that the greatest stir and excitement existed in consequence of Armijo's informing them that our intentions were to burn, slay, and destroy as we went. He corroborated the report that Rowland\* had been arrested for his supposed connection with the expedition, as well as the story that Howland, Baker, and Rosenbury were prisoners at Santa Fé, although he asserted that they had the liberty of the town. After telling us that the village of Anton Chico was some two or three miles to our left, and a little off the main road to San Miguel, the muleteer departed, apparently well satisfied that we had let him off without taking his scalp.

It was now deemed advisable to send word back to our friends on the Gallinas of what we had heard, and Manuel was accordingly despatched with a note detailing everything. Mr. Van Ness also sent back a number of letters of introduction to different individuals, with which he had been furnished, and other papers, fearing that he might be arrested, and that blame might fall upon innocent persons if he should be searched and the letters found upon his person. After this we turned off in the direction of Anton Chico. ..

\* Thomas Rowland, a brother of John Rowland. The name of the latter had appeared in some of the Texan papers as a commissioner in connexion with Dryden, both of whom were residents of New Mexico. The publication of their names, as commissioners friendly to the interests of the Texans, was made without their knowledge or consent.



☞ A ride of half an hour brought us to a small and miserable hovel upon the banks of the Rio Pecos. This is a beautiful, swift-running stream of fresh water, rising in the mountains in the vicinity of Santa Fé, and after fertilizing a succession of narrow but rich valleys, is supposed finally to empty into the Puercos, a tributary of the Rio Grande. We rode up to the low and narrow door of the hovel, at which stood an old, gray-haired man and two or three women, who were all evidently intimidated at the sight of strangers. As this secluded spot is entirely off the trail of the St. Louis traders, these half-civilized people had probably never before seen other than their own mixed race: as for ourselves, it was the first human habitation having any pretensions to civilization we had seen for months, and was certainly a welcome object to all. We did not dismount; but, while inquiring for the most direct route to Anton Chico, one of the women brought us some warm *tortillas* from the interior of the hovel, a little wooden bowl of *miel*—a species of molasses made from the stalk of the common Indian corn—and three or four large slices of goats' milk cheese. These, to us delicacies, they brought without money and without price—an earnest of the universal kindness and hospitality of the *women* of New Mexico. We threw some silver into their hands, wheeled our horses amid a shower of *muchas gracias* and *adios, caballeros*,\* and left them.

A ride of another half hour brought us in sight of Anton Chico, a village seated upon a little hill overlooking the Pecos, and probably containing some two or three hundred inhabitants. As we caught a first glimpse of the village, a suspicious, piratical-seeming Mexican, armed with a double-barrelled gun, broad-sword, and lance, and splendidly mounted upon a dashing black horse, passed within ten yards of us. Although he did not even nod at our approach, he still eyed us closely. Had he not been confident that his horse could easily outrun our jaded animals, I doubt whether he would have come within gunshot of us. At a distance, on the rising slope of a hill, another man, similarly armed and mounted, was seen; and he, too, was evidently watching our movements.

As we approached the little village, all was excitement and commotion. Women and children were seen running in

\* Many thanks; farewell, gentlemen; God be with you.



every direction, climbing the low houses and hiding behind the mud fences and walls. A large horse-mill, at which the inhabitants were grinding corn-stalks for the manufacture of *miel*, was deserted instantly, and everything plainly denoted that our sudden appearance had created the greatest consternation. We rode steadily up to the first door, as though not noticing that we had caused the least alarm, and asked a man of more hardihood than the rest, who had the courage to shew his face, although not enough to conceal his trepidation, whether we could purchase some fodder for our animals, and bread for ourselves. This question, being in Spanish, was understood by several of the frightened inhabitants, who were peering at us through the chinks of the surrounding doors, and who, finding that we did not ask them to surrender their lives and property at discretion, gradually gained colour and confidence, and began slowly to issue from their hiding-places. In three minutes we were surrounded by half a hundred men, women, and children, some inviting us this way, others that, and all apparently anxious to serve us, either from love of money or love of life, for many, no doubt, were impressed with the idea that we had come on purpose to do murder. The women and girls were very slightly clad, and many of the children were naked, while the men were so concealed in their coarse blankets, that we really could not tell what their dress might be underneath, or whether they had any. On the faces of many of the women and grown-up girls we noticed large, deep-red spots, apparently marks from their childhood, and disfiguring them greatly. I afterward ascertained that these marks were not natural, as my readers will learn in the progress of the narrative.

The little village of Anton Chico is built on a square, the houses fronting on the inner side, although there are entrances, protected by strong doors, on the outer. The houses are of one story only, built of *adobes*, a species of large, sun-dried bricks, while the tops are flat. They have neither windows nor floors, and in point of comfort and convenience, are only one degree removed from the rudest wigwam of the Indian. In case of attack from the savages, continually hovering and committing depredations upon the frontiers of New Mexico, these little hamlets serve as forts, the Indians rarely pursuing the inhabitants farther than their outer walls, as they carry on their warfare entirely on horseback. This des-



cription of Anton Chico will answer for a majority of the *ranchos* and smaller towns of New Mexico—their buildings being all constructed of the same materials and in the same manner.

We entered the largest house in the place. It had but two rooms, the earthen floor and scanty furniture of which gave them a prison-like and desolate appearance. Not a chair or table, knife or fork, did the occupants possess, and we were given to understand that we were in the house of the “first family” of Anton Chico. We called for something to eat, suggesting a somewhat varied “bill of fare” to be spread before us, for which we manifested our readiness to pay the highest prices: our dinner consisted—substantials and extras all enumerated—of tortillas, boiled eggs, and miel, the latter somewhat resembling molasses and water, the water predominating. In the mean while, our animals outside were faring infinitely better than ourselves, for they had an ample supply of corn and fodder—good, legitimate food for them, to which they did most ample justice.

The sun was about setting by the time we had finished our meal; yet we determined upon travelling some eight or ten miles farther towards St. Miguel that evening. After paying the master of the house the most exorbitant prices for every article we had procured, and after his daughters had presented each of us with a bundle of *cigarritos*\* of their own manufacture, we saddled and mounted our horses, and again proceeded for San Miguel.

Immediately on leaving Anton Chico we were compelled to climb a high, steep, and rocky hill or mountain, and on reaching its summit, by which time darkness had overtaken us, we found ourselves without a road, and completely lost in a grove of stunted pines and cedars. To advance was impossible, and we accordingly retraced our steps to the village we had left but a short time previous. Once more we secured our animals to a hedge-fence, near the house where we had procured our homely dinner, and after carrying our saddles, bridles, and other equipments to a corner of the room which had been appropriated to our use by the master, we rolled ourselves up in our blankets with the vain hope, as it was the first night we had passed under cover for

\* Small cigars, in New Mexico made of *punche*, a species of tobacco, covered with corn-husks or shucks.



months, of enjoying a refreshing sleep. But no such good luck was in store for us: there was a closeness in the atmosphere to which we had long been strangers, the room was occupied by some thirty men, women, and children, exclusive of our own party, and when all were provided with sleeping room, there was scarcely space enough on the hard earthen floor for a hat. The beds of our neighbours were nothing but sheepskins thrown upon the floor—their clothing a blanket, which they spread over themselves after lying down.

Every member of the family, which consisted of a grandfather and grandmother with their children and their children's children, seemed to be badly affected by a cold, or worse—for the younger branches were all evidently afflicted with the worst form of the whooping-cough. The grown people appeared to have the most distressing coughs to match their colds, while the children seemed at times to be in perfect convulsions. Occasionally the distressing sounds would all die away; anon, one of the children would begin coughing frightfully, another would join in the discordant din, and immediately the whole family were in full chorus—and thus they barked away the hours.

Notwithstanding the horrible uproar, however, I finally fell into a half sleep. About one o'clock in the morning I was awakened by some disturbance among our animals, and in going out to ascertain the cause, I was asked by a Mexican if I was the captain of the party. As this was about all I could at that time understand, I called Lewis, in the belief that the fellow had something important to communicate, and in this I was not deceived. He said that we were all to be taken prisoners on the next day by a party who were then mustering in the valley, near Cuesta. He farther stated that the inhabitants of Anton Chico would fall upon us were they not fearful of our arms. To wind up, he informed us that we should most certainly be shot, and for this peculiarly pleasant news he asked us one dollar! Had his information extended no farther than that we were to be arrested, and had this statement been gratuitous, we might have paid some heed to his story; as it was, it sounded very much as though he had made up what he considered a dollar's worth of bad tidings, and thought us simple enough to pay him for his trouble. Entertaining this belief, of course we returned to our blankets without



giving the fellow even so much as the sixteenth of what he charged; yet I could not but think that there might be some truth in his story.

We were up at an early hour in the morning, and after swallowing a bowl of atole, sweetened with a little miel, once more took the road for San Miguel. Although the male part of the inhabitants of the village we had just left had every outward appearance of friendship, there was still something suspicious in their movements which convinced us that they would have acted otherwise had they not been restrained by fear. To shew that they were not all honest, some one of them stole a saddle-blanket from me. It was of little value, however, and I made no mention of the circumstance to the man in whose house we had passed the night.

We must have been blind, indeed, to the evidences around us, not to see that the country was in a state of excitement occasioned by the approach of the Texans—the suspicious men who had crossed our route the evening before, the earnestness with which they eyed our movements, and then the arrest of Howland and his companions, all tended to impress us with the belief that we should at least be questioned closely as to our business, and the objects which had induced us to enter the country, if not detained, in case Armijo should oppose the advance of the Texans. But we never thought of being disarmed or imprisoned. I had no inconsiderable sum of money in gold, confined about my body in a linen belt: this I thought it more prudent to conceal under the buttons which graced the sides of my riding pantaloons. There was not room for all the money under the buttons—what was left I still retained in the belt, which I now placed in one of my pockets. A valuable breastpin I concealed under one of my waistband buttons, two or three articles of jewelry less costly I hid under the folds of my shirt bosom, and a gold watch and chain I secreted as safely as was possible. In a country filled, as I knew this to be, with thieves and cut-throats of the worst description, I was anxious to conceal the fact entirely that I had valuable property of any kind with me.

On reaching the summit of the steep hill overlooking Anton Chico, and emerging from the cedars in which we were lost the evening before, we found a level table-land spread out before us, of rare beauty. In the distance, to



the north, that spur of the Rocky Mountains at the foot of which lies the mud-built city of Santa Fé, was now plainly visible.

We had travelled but two or three miles, after reaching the table-land, before a Mexican, who had seen us approaching from a small house some little distance from the roadside, came out to meet us. He gratuitously informed us, without our asking the question, that the nearest route to San Miguel would take us directly through the little village of Cuesta, and took no inconsiderable pains to give such directions as would preclude the possibility of our missing the road. At the time, we considered this an act of kindness on his part; but after circumstances made it quite certain that he had been employed to draw us into a snare already set for our apprehension.

After thanking the Mexican for his information, we once more proceeded towards San Miguel. About noon we arrived at the brow of a high, steep, and rocky hill, overlooking a narrow and fertile valley through which the Pecos was flowing. Immediately below us was a small collection of houses; and some distance up the stream, but in plain sight, was the little village of Cuesta. The road leading into the valley ran directly down the rocky sides of the hill, and was so rough and broken that we were compelled to dismount, and lead or drive our animals. As we slowly descended, we could plainly see that our approach had been discovered, for there was commotion in all parts of the beautiful valley. Several horsemen were seen emerging from Cuesta, and dashing, at full speed, towards the spot where we must first strike the level land. A point of the hill now concealed them from our sight, and when we finally reached the bottom not a single human being was visible in any direction.

Van Ness, Lewis, and myself arrived in the valley some ten minutes before Howard and Fitzgerald. While our eyes were turned towards the hillside, waiting their approach, we were suddenly surrounded by more than a hundred roughly-dressed, but well-mounted soldiers, armed with lances, swords, bows and arrows, and miserable *escopetas*, or old-fashioned carbines. The leader of this band, whom I will at once introduce as the notorious Dimasio Salezar, instantly rode up, and addressed us as *amigos*, or friends, with the greatest apparent cordiality. He asked, us who we were,



and whether we were not from Texas. Lewis at once informed him that we were, and that we had been detached from the main body, then some thirty miles distant on the Gallinas, for the purpose of consulting with the authorities, either at San Miguel or Santa Fé, and that he was anxious to see the governor. To this Salezar bowed, as much as to say that all was right, and we fairly congratulated ourselves upon our reception. There was a frankness, a plausibility about the miscreant that completely concealed his real intentions.

On the arrival of Howard and Fitzgerald we remounted our horses, and, in company with our new acquaintances, rode to the first house that presented itself. Here Salezar called a halt, and after his men had completely surrounded us on every side, as if to hear any conversation that might ensue, but with no other intentions, their leader remarked, with the utmost blandness, that we must be aware we could not enter their territory with arms in our hands—that it was contrary to the laws and usages of civilized nations—and that he hoped we would have no objections to placing our rifles and pistols in his keeping, each labelled so that its owner might know it again, until the business we had with the authorities should be arranged. He appeared deeply to regret that his duty compelled him to make this request of persons evidently gentlemen, and whose objects, he doubted not, were of the most friendly nature; he had been ordered by his superiors, he said, to request us to deliver up our arms, and sincerely hoped we would excuse him.

Finding themselves surrounded by a force at least twenty times their number, without the remotest chance to escape by flight even if they felt disposed, and completely imposed upon by the apparent fairness and openness of Salezar's conduct, my companions gave up their arms. It was now necessary for me to inform Salezar as to my positions and intentions. Through Van Ness, I told him that I was a citizen of the United States, that I was merely a traveller, on a journey through the interior of Mexico, and that I had a passport from the Mexican consul at New Orleans, which I took from my pocket and handed him. Not a word could the fellow read, but, placing the document in the hands of his second in command, Don



Jesus,\* who only wanted natural talents to make him even a greater villain than his master Salezar, who told him to examine it. After reading the passport from first to last, the worthy lieutenant and secretary returned it to his captain, who remarked that he presumed all was right, but he was reluctantly compelled to demand my arms and retain them until I had seen the governor. With even more reluctance I gave my rifle and pistols into the possession of the miscreant, although my companions openly expressed their confidence that they would be returned in good faith. Now that he had our weapons in his power, I thought I could discover a gleam of satisfaction lighting up Salezar's countenance, yet his feelings did not openly betray him. It was afterward evident enough that he had used dissimulation, and adopted a courteous tone foreign to his nature—even with his myrmidons around him, the cowardly man did not dare peremptorily to demand our rifles and pistols.

Having distributed all our weapons among his principal men, Salezar next drew his officers into the little house in front of which the scene had taken place. In the mean time we were left outside, under no apparent restraint. I led my horse, the faithful old "Jim the Butcher," as he was called, to an irrigating canal close by, and after allowing him to drink his fill of the cool and excellent water, walked back with him to my pack-mule, opened one of the leathern panniers, and commenced feeding him on bread which I had purchased that morning at Anton Chico. While at that village, so great was my craving for bread after being without it for months, I had purchased all that was offered for sale, really thinking that I should eat it all, although I had at least a month's supply. A moment's reflection now taught me that I was in a country where I could have it fresh every day, and as my appetite by this time was somewhat appeased, I began to feed my horse upon the stores I had provided for my own use. A crowd of men and half-naked women and

\* I have given this name the Spanish spelling, although it is pronounced *Hesoos*. Among the women of both Mexico and Spain *Jesusa* is a very common, and considered a very pretty name. By the same rule of pronunciation it is called *Hesoosa*. As is remarked above, I have given these names, singular and irreverent as they may appear to an American, their Spanish orthography. Were a Mexican to see *Hesoos* in print he would not know it, even were it his own name.



girls pressed around me, apparently astonished that I should give my horse what was really one of their greatest luxuries; and it was while I was thus engaged that Salezar and his officers stepped from the house and a second time approached us.

His first request was that we should form in a line. He then said he was obliged to take from us any papers or articles we might have about our persons—such were his orders from the governor. There was even an approach to delicacy in his command, for the scoundrel had not as yet shewn his real colours; and as we were weaponless, and completely in his power, we submitted to the degrading operation of having our pockets turned inside out, and our persons searched, by a committee of his officers. During this process, very fortunately for me, neither my gold pieces nor my other valuables were discovered; but all my papers, note-book, penknife, with such other articles as I happened to have in my pockets, were taken from me. At one time one of the fellows had his hands upon the end of the old linen belt in which I had carried my gold, and which still contained nearly a hundred dollars; its ragged appearance alone saved it, for, thinking it but a worthless piece of worn-out cloth, he permitted me to retain it in my possession. Had Salezar got hold of this belt he would at once have seen the places from which I had but recently cut a number of doubloons, as well as found such of the gold as was still left; and so great was the scoundrel's avarice, that I believe he would have boiled me could he have found no other means to extract my treasures.

Up to this time the conduct of Salezar, with the arguments he used to sustain him in arresting us and taking our papers and other articles, was to a certain degree honourable, and it was impossible to suspect the deep treachery and atrocious designs lying under an exterior so apparently fair. We were now to read a new chapter in his character, one that broke upon us with all that suddenness and startling effect which fiction-writers strive to attain in their scenes of most thrilling, blood-freezing horror.

Our papers and effects had been tied in a handkerchief and removed, and we were waiting the next movement of our captors with some little impatience, when Salezar suddenly ordered twelve of his men, all armed with old muskets or carbines, to march up in front of us. The movement ap-



peared strange, more particularly when we noticed that the men, now paraded directly before us and within three yards, were pale, and fairly trembling as with fright; but still we could not suspect the horrible design of their leader. Our suspense was of short duration, however; for no sooner had he arranged the twelve men in front of us than it became but too evident his intentions were to shoot us on the spot! Fitzgerald was the first to speak. The brave but eccentric Irishman had seen much service in Spain, understood not only the language, but the treacherous and suspicious character of the Mexicans, and now fathomed the intentions of Salezar. Prefacing his short speech with a strong oath, the excited man, with fists clenched, and a rich brogue, exclaimed, "They're going to shoot us, boys; let's pitch into 'em and die in hot blood; it's muchasier!" At the same moment I cast my eyes around, and noticed that the crowd in the rear were falling back in two straight lines, as if to escape the balls in their passage, while the women and girls were wringing their hands and flying from point to point, apparently in deep despair.

That we were to be immediately shot was now terribly manifest. We exchanged glances with each other, and those glances plainly told that each of my companions, in obedience to Fitzgerald's emphatic call, was prepared to rush upon the cowardly and faithless miscreants the moment they were in the act of levelling their guns, to wrest their weapons from them, and then to sell his life at as dear a rate as possible. I will give Lewis the credit of acting, at that moment of extreme peril, as became a man. My station happened to be on the extreme left of my companions, the position bringing me within a yard of a young Mexican, whom I afterward ascertained to be a son of the Alcalde of San Miguel. Tied loosely around his waist was a coarse cotton handkerchief, in which he had stuck two of Colt's revolving pistols, taken from one of my friends. These I instantly determined to seize upon in the *melée*, while each of my companions had singled out his man to spring upon at the signal.

A man lives almost an age in a single moment of imminent danger—his thoughts crowd upon each other with such lightning rapidity, that his past life, its promises and hopes, are reviewed at a glance. I thought of home, relations, friends, in the fleeting moment which passed after Salezar had manifested his inhuman intentions; but the thoughts that came



uppermost with all of us were of deep regret that we had given up our arms to such cowardly assassins, mingled with the bitter consciousness that we were to be shot down like dogs, without a possible chance that our friends could ever know the place or manner of our death. But our thoughts were suddenly checked by a motion from Salezar, as if to give the word of command for our execution. I cast hurried glances at Fitzgerald and my comrades for a signal to make a dash; but at this juncture an altercation ensued between Dimasio and a Mexican named Vigil. Not a word could I understand, but from my companions I learned that the latter was interfering for our lives. He contended that we had entered the settlements openly and peacefully, and that we had asked to see and hold converse with Governor Armijo. With him rested the power of life and death, and before him we must be taken. Vigil prevailed over the blood-thirsty captain, and thus were our lives spared; but in the few moments which had passed since we were first drawn up, we had lived a common lifetime of excitement.

Foiled in his murderous intentions by the prompt aid of Don Gregorio Vigil, whom we afterwards saw and thanked for his timely interference, Salezar now ordered Don Jesus to march us immediately to San Miguel, where it was thought Armijo had arrived with a large body of troops. With regret we saw our friend Vigil leave us. He was the owner of an estate near San Miguel, a man of good heart and correct principles, and had no little influence with the Mexicans in that quarter.

Under an escort of some half dozen men, and followed by a rabble of men, women, and children, we now set off on foot for San Miguel, leaving our well-trying animals in the hands of the miscreants who had captured us. Arrived at the little village of Cuesta, we were marched into the house of the Alcalde, where, after placing two sentinels over us, Don Jesus left us to make some arrangement for the march. While in this house we were visited by every woman and child in the place, the former giving us bread, cheese, and stewed pumpkins, and appearing deeply to compassionate us in our unfortunate condition. They undoubtedly thought we should be executed immediately on meeting with the governor, who they took every means to inform us was a brutal and unfeeling tyrant, delighting in every act of cruelty which might



impress his subjects with fear, and ever anxious to shew off his great influence and power by acts of the most atrocious persecution.

In half an hour Don Jesus returned, and ordered us to prepare for instant departure. We were destitute of every article of clothing except what we had on, and as the nights among the mountains were at this season of the year raw and chilly, we asked him to return at least one of our blankets to each of us. Without apparently heeding this request, he turned to one of his men and ordered him to bring three or four lariats, or ropes, with which to tie us, intending, as he said, to take us before the governor in that degrading condition. Our friend Vigil was now out of the way, Salezar had taken the road towards Anton Chico with the main body of his men, and thinking that the heartless villain who now had charge of us might have adopted this plan to place us completely in his power, and then butcher us under orders from his superior, we peremptorily refused to be tied. He still insisted; but on our informing him that we would walk peaceably to San Miguel, he finally gave up his purpose. Forming us in front of the house, he then placed two of the guard in advance with bows and arrows and heavy clubs, two more in the rear armed in the same manner, and all of them barefoot, while he himself mounted a mule, and took his place at the side of our party. He had an American rifle resting before him on the pommel of the saddle, and drawing an old rusty sword, he started us off, simply informing us that the first one who left his place would be rewarded by the loss of his head.

There was something supremely ridiculous, not only in his threat, but in the appearance of our guard; and gloomy as our situation was, we could not help laughing. We could easily have fallen upon the miserable apologies for men who were guarding us, and disarmed them in a twinkling; but we had no means of getting clear and rejoining our men afterwards; and as recapture would have been death, thoughts of an escape were not entertained.

A rapid march of an hour, along the valley of the Pecos, brought us to the little village of Puertecito, the residence of both Salezar and the fellow who now had charge of us. Here we were halted for a short time, to give the inhabitants an opportunity of gazing at five unfortunate prisoners, and



to convince them of the great prowess of the redoubtable Dimasio Salezar, and his equally valiant second in command, who had boldly conceived, and successfully carried into execution, a daring plan for our capture. That the women all pitied us was evident; for the commiserating<sup>a</sup> exclamation of *pobrecitos* ! \* as they gave us bread, cheese, and such food as they had at hand, fell from their tongues in softest and most feeling tones. They knew their husbands and brothers, and, knowing them, felt that little of mercy or kindness could we expect at their hands.

A short distance above Puertecito we were obliged to ford the Rio Pecos. The water was not more than two feet in depth; but as my lame and weak ankle had now begun to swell, from the active and unwonted exercise, I was deterred from taking off my boots, by a fear that I could not get them on again. To soak my feet thoroughly, and to continue the march in this disagreeable plight, was, therefore, my only alternative.

The distance from Cuesta to San Miguel was fourteen or fifteen miles; and it was nearly sundown before the spire of the little church at the latter appeared in sight. Weary and faint from the unusual exercise, and extremely unwell, from the great change which had recently taken place in our diet, we were escorted through the principal square, or *plaza*, and taken to a little hole which was dignified with the name of a room. A crowd followed us to our prison doors, and continued to gaze at us until the last minute.

The *alcalde*, a gruff, bad-countenanced man, sent us in a miserable meal of tortillas and weak mutton broth, while the priest of the place, more liberal, sent his servant with a generous bowl of hot coffee for each of us. Our scanty supper over, our thoughts were next turned towards sleep; but the earthen floor of our quarters was without a single blanket to relieve its hardness, and the chilling blast that came down from the adjoining mountains as the shades of evening drew nigh, told us, more plainly than words, that we need expect neither comfort nor sleep that night. We sent word to the *alcalde* of our unfortunate plight: he answered

\* Poor fellows! I believe, is a literal translation, although it means much more. Nothing can be more touchingly sweet than the pronunciation of this word by a Spanish or Mexican woman. The tones come fresh and warm from the heart when an object worthy of compassion presents itself.



our petition by saying that he could do nothing for us. A kind-hearted woman living close by, however, sent us a buffalo skin and a single blanket, and another blanket I purchased of a man in the crowd, for which I gave him an English sovereign. With these we made up a bed for five persons. I suffered more than any of my companions, the bread I had eaten giving me a severe attack of colic; and I crawled from the ground in the morning weak and unrefreshed.

Thus did we spend our first night in prison.



## CHAPTER XIV.

**Ordered to March towards Santa Fé.—Gloomy Anticipations.—Meet with a Party of Mexican troops.—Description of Don Jesus.—Our first Interview with Governor Armijo.—Carlos Seen.—Barbarous Execution of one of our Comrades.—Ordered before the Governor.—An Exciting Trial.—Howland Condemned to Die.—Cruel Mode of Execution.—Noble Conduct of Howland.—Kindness of a Young Priest.—Departure of Mexican Chiefs for Anton Chico.—Description of Manuel Pino.—Great Rejoicings at San Miguel.**

We had no sooner risen, than Don Jesus told us that the Governor had not yet arrived, and that he should march with us directly towards Santa Fé, distant some sixty miles, in the hopes of meeting him upon the road. Before starting, we sent out, and purchased an entire sheep, an officious fellow, named Tomas Bustamente, whose countenance appeared to indicate that he had some honesty, acting as our agent in the transaction. A part of this sheep, Tomas cooked for our breakfast, the priest again sending us a large pitcher of coffee.

It was nearly nine o'clock before everything was in readiness for our departure. Although we were anxious to see the Governor, and learn the worst, it may be imagined that our anticipations were not of a very pleasant nature. Had we been prisoners in the hands of any other people under the sun, our feelings would have been far different; but we were now in the power of men who possessed all the vices of savage life without one of the virtues that civilization teaches. We felt that although our lives had been spared the previous day, it was but a reprieve; that we were still in the hands of a semi-civilized enemy—cruel, relentless, and treacherous—who looked upon us as heretics, and the common enemies of their religion and race; and we had fearful reason to believe that the appearance of Armijo would be the signal for our immediate execution. Surely, the emotions of that hour, when the future was looming up



so close and dark upon us, are not to be appreciated by the reader.

Our guard, which on the previous day had only consisted of four, was now increased to eight men, four members of the country militia, armed with bows and arrows, and mounted upon asses, being stationed, two on either side, while Don Jesus, on his mule, hovered around, as if to guard the weaker points in the order of march. This addition to our escort had been provided by the old alcalde of San Miguel, with the view, probably, of rendering our escape a matter of positive impossibility; yet, enfeebled as we were from our many privations, and the long, weary pilgrimage across the prairies, we still felt certain that we could, at any time, capture Don Jesus and all his men with the greatest ease. A determined rush, accompanied by a true Anglo-Saxon shout of defiance, would have brought every one of the cowardly wretches to his knees, begging for mercy; yet we should not have been able successfully to run the gauntlet of well-mounted men stationed at all the passes between us and our friends.

After parading us in front of our miserable quarters, and arranging his guard around us with much pomp and show, Don Jesus ordered us to march. The plaza was again crowded with the women, children, and old men, of San Miguel, as we hurriedly marched through it, many of the boys following and gazing at us until we reached the extremities of the town. We had not travelled more than a couple of miles before a tolerably well-dressed woman came running towards us from a small house, bringing a bottle of the country whiskey, and saying that it was for our use. This we drank upon the spot, and as we thanked the good hearted creature for her kindness, she appeared to feel deeply for us in our misfortunes. Even after we had been hurried off by our inhuman guard, the woman still remained to gaze upon us, looking her last at the *pobrecitos*, whom she really thought the sun would not set upon alive. The almost universal brutality and cold-heartedness of the men of New Mexico are in strange contrast with the kind dispositions and tender sympathies exhibited by all classes of the women.

A brisk walk of another mile brought us in contact with a party of some two hundred half-dressed and miserably-armed Mexicans, on their march towards San Miguel. Their commander was a brutal, piratical-visaged scoundrel, who,



after ordering Don Jesus to halt, cursed us with every opprobrious epithet, said we should have been shot when first taken, and then asked why we were not tied. While Don Jesus was stammering forth some excuse, the fellow ordered his trumpeter to sound an advance, and in three minutes a turn of the road concealed this extremely valiant party and their doughty captain from our sight. Before they departed, however, we learned that they were to act against Colonel Cooke, Captain Sutton, and their men, and we were also informed that Armijo had left Santa Fé in the morning with several hundred men, and that we should meet *him* before nightfall.

The miscreant who had charge of us now stated that his imperative duty made it necessary to tie us. With a mock sensibility he pretended that it was against his wish to do this, but as a superior officer had ordered him he must comply, simply for form's sake. After a little hesitation on the part of Van Ness and Fitzgerald they consented to be tied, and a *lariat* was accordingly fastened around their wrists, while the other end was held by one of the guard. Lewis was also tied and led along like a dog; but as Major Howard was suffering from an old wound received in an Indian fight, and as I was also lame, and as Don Jesus well knew, had slept none the night before, he allowed us to continue the march without being confined. He ordered us, however, whenever we met with any of the different parties of troops we were now constantly passing, to fold our hands upon our breasts as a token of submission! Never shall I forget this Don Jesus. He had a coarse, dark, hang-dog face, a black but vicious eye, a head which I am phrenologist enough to know was as destitute of the organs of benevolence and the better attributes of our nature as outer darkness is of light, and if he had a heart at all, it legitimately belonged to a hyena or a prairie wolf.

He pushed, or rather drove us rapidly onward until past the middle of the afternoon, during which time we must have passed nearly a thousand troops, the larger portion of them armed with bows and arrows or old and worn-out muskets. The sun had hidden himself behind a range of mountains which divides the valley of the Pecos at this point from that of the Rio Grande, and we were approaching an old and ruined mission, which, in former times, had served the double purpose of a church and fortress, when suddenly the



sharp and discordant blast of a trumpet announced the approach of General Manuel Armijo, governor of New Mexico. An abrupt turn in the road had at first concealed his ragged but numerous cavalcade from our sight, but a few steps brought us in full view of all the pomp, circumstance, and chivalry, bows and arrows, sycophants and rascals, with which the governor is usually surrounded. When I say that our guard had been entertaining us during the day with stories of Armijo's cruelty and barbarity, and that they freely gave it as their opinion that we should be ordered to execution on sight, I need not add that the present moment was exciting to a painful degree.

The governor himself, a fine, portly man, was mounted on a mule of immense size, and gayly as well as richly caparisoned. Don Jesus had formed us into line by the roadside, there to await the advance of Armijo. The moment the quick eye of the latter caught a glance of us he rode directly up to the spot where we were standing, and, without dismounting, addressed us with no little politeness, shook each of us by the hand with much apparent cordiality, called us *amigos*, or friends, and after saying that he had heard of our capture, asked us who we were. Lewis immediately answered—and here the spirit of the craven caitiff first manifested itself—that we were merchants from the United States. Van Ness interrupted him at once by saying that with the exception of myself, we were all Texans; but, without heeding him, Armijo grasped Lewis by the collar of his dragoon jacket, dragged him up alongside of his mule, and, pointing to the buttons, upon which were a single star and the word “Texas,” he sternly said,

“What does this mean? I can read—*Texas!*” at the same time pointing to the latter word and pronouncing it emphatically. Lewis quailed under his iron grasp, but without heeding him the governor continued, “You need not think to deceive me: no merchant from the United States ever travels with a Texan military jacket.”

After asking several questions, to which Lewis returned stammering answers, Armijo finally spoke of our main party, and inquired its number and the intentions of the commissioners. He was answered by Van Ness and Howard that it was a mercantile expedition from Texas, and that the intentions of the leaders were pacific. Mr. Van Ness then told him that I did not belong to the party any farther than that



I accompanied it for the protection it afforded against the Indians, and added that I had a passport from the Mexican consul in New Orleans. This passport, with all my papers, was in the hands of Don Jesus, who immediately gave it to Armijo. After reading it aloud in presence of all of us, he gave it back into the hands of the captain of our guard, at the same time remarking that the passport was a good one, but that, as I was found in company with the enemies of New Mexico, he should detain me until he could learn farther of my intentions. My companions had invariably assured me that I should be released immediately on having an interview with the governor; but by this time I had seen enough of the people of New Mexico, and had heard enough of Armijo, to convince me that I need not look for justice at his hands, and was therefore but little disappointed at the disposition he made of my case. After what we had heard of the fellow, and his cruel barbarities, we felt in a measure satisfied on ascertaining that we were not to be shot upon the spot, and without a hearing.

After disposing of my case and passport thus summarily, Armijo gratuitously informed us that he was an honourable man and not an assassin, and, what was more, that he was a great warrior. Whatever doubts we might have entertained on this point, we did not see fit to express any at the time, and the fellow may have taken our silence for a tacit acknowledgment of our belief in his magnanimity and bravery. He next asked us which of our little party best understood the Spanish language, as he wanted one of us to accompany him as interpreter. At this question Lewis eagerly pressed forward, and after asserting that he could speak the language more fluently than any of his companions, at once proffered his services. He really was more fluent with Spanish than any of us, having resided many years in Chihuahua and other parts of Mexico. Armijo immediately ordered a mule for him to ride, and after his hands were untied he mounted the animal and rode in among his new associates. That up to this time he had acted in perfect good faith towards Colonel Cooke and the expedition, I have not the least doubt; but he now saw that he was completely in the power of men whom he understood thoroughly, and from whom he well knew he could expect neither mercy nor justice; he saw, too, that by betraying his former associates, those who had often



befriended him, he might gain life and liberty, and for this he at once sundered all the holy ties of religion, honour, companionship, and patriotism. Not one of us suspected him at the time of other than honourable intentions, but after circumstances rendered his base treachery unquestionable.

Armijo now turned to Don Jesus, and in a pompous and bombastic tone ordered him to guard us safely back to San Miguel that night, as he wished to hold a conversation with us early on the ensuing morning.

"But they have already walked ten leagues to-day, your excellency, and are hardly able to walk all the way back to-night,"\* was the answer of the fellow, who was thinking of his own personal convenience and comfort all the while.

"They are able to walk ten leagues more," retorted Armijo, with a stately wave of his hand. "The Texans are active and untiring people—I know them," he continued; "if one of them *pretends* to be sick or tired on the road, *shoot him down and bring me his ears!* Go!"

"Yes, your excellency," was the obsequious answer of the cringing Don Jesus, and with a flourish of trumpets the great General Armijo and his motley army now left us. As they filed by, in helter-skelter order, we noticed our former guide, the runaway Carlos, in the crowd. He was seated upon a mule, his arms and breast bandaged, and we afterward learned that he had been stabbed and severely wounded by a nephew of Armijo, for his supposed connection with the Texan expedition.

The sun had ceased to tinge the highest tops of the eastern mountains ere the last stragglers and camp-followers of Armijo had trotted past us, and we were extremely tired and faint after our weary march of nearly thirty miles; yet this fellow, who in one breath told us he was "an honourable man," almost in the next ordered us back over the same rough and broken road without food or sleep! The penalty of failure was death, and to be certain that his orders had been strictly fulfilled, or perhaps to gratify his curiosity, he wished to see the *ears* of such of us as might fall by the roadside, unable to endure the excessive fatigue.

\* The Spanish league lacks but a small fraction of being equal to three English miles.



As if fearful of not having an opportunity to fulfil Armijo's last command, Don Jesus now rushed us back over the same ground at a more rapid pace than ever. I was not only weary and unwell by this time, but my lame ankle was so swollen and stiff, from the unusual exercise, that I could hardly drag it along; yet, determined that the honourable governor should see something of me in the morning besides my ears, I hired the privilege, at an exorbitant rate, of a seat on the donkey of one of the Mexicans, the owner to ride behind me. The poor, scraggy animal could not be more than eight hands high, and appeared hardly able to bear up under one full-grown man; yet the Mexican told me he was strong enough to carry two, and hurriedly helped me to mount a miserable apology for a saddle strapped loosely to the back of the donkey. Possessing all the perverseness and obstinacy, and up to all the tricks of his race, he still allowed a perfect stranger, not only to him but his kind, to mount in quietness. Not so when his owner undertook the task of bestriding him; for no sooner had he placed his hands on the donkey's hip joints, in the act of springing to his perch behind me, than the animal kicked violently up—landing him several yards in the rear, flat upon his back, while the same movement hoisted me skyward in a line as straight as a rocket. Although extremely poor in flesh, I still had specific gravity enough to bring me down; and while in the act of descending directly upon the haunches of the ass, another kick-up gave me another hoist in the air. I fortunately made the ground in my second descent, without sustaining the least personal injury. Gloomy as were our prospects, my companions could not resist the temptation to laugh heartily at my ludicrous exhibition of ground and lofty tumbling, and I even took a part myself in the merry outbreak when I ascertained that I was unhurt.

The road between Santa Fé and San Miguel is rough and uneven, running over hills, and crossing deep gullies.\* Bad as it was, however, and faint and tired as we were, we reached a small prairie within six miles of the latter place about midnight. The heavens now became suddenly over-

\* This road, I believe, was made at the expense of the St. Louis traders, and is the only part of the long route between Independence and Santa Fé upon which any work has been done or money expended.



cast, and a dark thunder cloud soon rendered it impossible for even our guard to see the way any farther. Just as the shower commenced falling, a halt was called, and lying upon the ground without blankets, and in the midst of a tremendous rain, we slept soundly till morning.

A walk, or rather a hobble of two hours, for we were so stiff and foot-sore that we could not walk, brought us once more to the plaza or public square of San Miguel. The place was now literally filled with armed men—a few regular troops being stationed immediately about the person of Armijo, while more than nine tenths of the so-called soldiers were miserably deficient in every military appointment. A sergeant's guard of the regular troops was immediately detailed to take charge of our little party, and after bidding adieu to Don Jesus, as we hoped, for ever, we were marched to a small room adjoining the soldiers' quartel. This room fronted on the plaza, and had a small window looking out in that direction; but the only entrance was from a door on the side. Sentinels were immediately placed at the little window and door, leading us to suppose that this was to be our regular prison-house; but we had scarcely been there ten minutes before a young priest entered at the door, and said that one of our party was to be immediately shot! While gazing at each other with looks of eager inquiry, wondering that one was to be shot and not all, and while each one of us was earnestly and painfully speculating on the question which of his fellows Armijo had singled out for a victim, the young priest raised himself on tiptoe, and looking over our heads, pointed through the windows of our close and narrow prison. We hurriedly turned our eyes in that direction, and were shocked at seeing one of our men, his hands tied behind his back, while a bandage covered his eyes, led across the plaza by a small guard of soldiers. Who the man was we could not ascertain at the time, but that he was one of the Texans was evident enough from his dress. The priest said that he had first been taken prisoner, that while attempting to escape he had been retaken, and was now to suffer death. A horrible death it was, too! His cowardly executioners led him to a house near the same corner of the square we were in, not twenty yards from us, and after heartlessly pushing him upon his knees, with his head against the wall, six of the guard stepped back about three paces, and, at the



order of the corporal, *shot the poor fellow in the back!* Even at that distance the executioners but half did their barbarous work; for the man was only wounded, and lay writhing upon the ground in great agony. The corporal stepped up, and with a pistol ended his sufferings by shooting him through the heart. So close was the pistol that the man's shirt was set on fire, and continued to burn until it was extinguished by his blood!

Scarcely was this horrible scene over before we were taken by a strong guard from our prison. Without even being able to divine their intentions, we were marched directly by our late companion, conducted through two or three streets, and finally paraded in front of a small and gloomy hovel having a single window. The movement was conducted silently, and there was a mysterious solemnity about it, which, added to the late barbarous murder of one of our party, overwhelmed us with sensations of doubt and alarm, even more insupportable than would have been an order for our instant execution.

Immediately in front of the little window, and at a distance of twelve steps, we were next formed in line by our guard, and ordered not to leave our position or move in the least. All was mystery, uncertainty, anxiety. Soon Armijo, dressed in a blue military jacket, with a sword at his side, was seen to approach the window. One by one he pointed us out to some person behind him, of whom we could not obtain even a glimpse, and as he pointed he asked the concealed individual who and what the person was to whom his finger was now directed, his name, business, and the relation in which he stood with the Texan expedition. These questions were asked in a loud tone of voice, and were distinctly heard by all of us, but the answers did not reach our ears, although we listened with an earnestness and intensity that were almost painful. It seemed to us that we were undergoing an arbitrary trial for our lives—a trial in which we could have no friendly counsel, could bring no witnesses, offer no proofs or arguments to the bloodthirsty and lawless wretch who alone constituted the tribunal. But this torturing suspense was of short duration, for after having questioned his concealed agent as to each of us separately, Armijo issued from the little house on an opposite side from the window, and with a pompous dignity of manner slowly approached the spot where we were standing,



awaiting with deep anxiety, a sentence from which we knew there was no appeal.

"Gentlemen," commenced the governor, stopping in front of us, "gentlemen, you told me the truth yesterday—Don Samuel has corroborated your statements—I save your lives. I have ordered Don Samuel to be shot—he will be shot in five minutes. He ran away from Santa Fé, and, in attempting to reach Colonel Cooke's party, has been retaken. You now see the penalty of trying to escape. His fate will be yours if you attempt it. Sergeant of the guard, conduct these gentlemen back to prison." This was delivered in a loud, military voice.

While congratulating ourselves upon this most unexpected termination of a trial of such harrowing interest, and wondering who the Don Samuel was whose testimony had thus evidently saved our lives, our old friend and guide, Howland, was led forth from the little room. The truth now flashed upon us—we knew that his name was Samuel, that he had been acquainted in former years with Armijo, and that the Mexicans seldom use other than the Christian appellation when addressing or speaking of a man. Howland's hands were tied closely behind him, and as he approached us, we could plainly see that his left ear and cheek had been cut entirely off, and that his left arm was also much hacked, apparently by a sword. The guard conducted their doomed prisoner directly by us on the left, and when within three yards of us the appearance of his scarred cheek was ghastly; but as he turned his head to speak, a placid smile, as of heroic resignation to his fate, lit up the other side of his face, forming a contrast almost unearthly. We eagerly stepped forward to address him, but the miscreants who had charge of us pushed us back with their muskets, refusing even the small boon of exchanging a few words with an old companion now about to suffer an ignominious death. Howland saw and felt the movement on our part. He turned upon us another look, a look full of brave resolution as well as resignation, and, in a low but distinct tone, uttered, "*Good-bye, boys; I've got to suffer. You must—*" But the rest of the sentence died on his lips, for he was now some yards in the rear of us, and out of hearing.

The guard who had charge of us now wheeled us round, and marched us in the same route taken by our unfortunate guide, and within ten yards of him. A more gloomy pro-



cession cannot be imagined. With Howland in advance, we were now conducted to the plaza, and halted close by the spot where, in plain sight, lay the body of our recently-murdered companion. A bandage was placed over the eyes of the new victim, but not until he had seen the corpse of his dead comrade. Worlds would we have given could we be permitted to exchange one word with our unoffending friend—to receive his last, dying request—yet even this poor privilege was denied us. After the cords which confined his arms had been tightened, and the bandage pulled down so as to conceal the greater part of his face, Howland was again ordered to march. With a firm, undaunted step, he walked up to the place of execution, and there, by the side of his companion, was compelled to fall upon his knees with his face towards the wall. Six of the guard then stepped back a yard or two, took deliberate aim at his back, and before the report of their muskets died away, poor Howland was in eternity! Thus fell as noble, as generous, and as brave a man as ever walked the earth. He was a native of New-Bedford, Massachusetts, of a good family, and by his gentlemanly and affable deportment, had endeared himself to every member of the expedition. In a daring attempt to escape, and reach Colonel Cooke's party, in order to give him important information, he had been retaken after a desperate struggle, and the life he could not lose in the heat of that struggle, was taken from him in this base and cowardly manner.

Our feelings, while looking upon this brutal tragedy, it is impossible to describe. A fearful, a terrible thing it is to see a man shot—one who deserves his fate—even when he is allowed to stand bravely up and die facing his executioners: for much as every human being may dread the king of terrors, there is hardly one so base as not to wish, when death makes his last inexorable call, to meet him face to face. How much more terrible, then, to see a brave and honourable being like Howland, full of manhood, and capable of no base or craven deed, led out and shot in a manner so cowardly, and to see this, too, without the power to act in his behalf! Tumultuous feelings did the scene call up—feelings of indignation and deep hatred for his worse than savage murderers; and for him, between whom and us the common ties of friendship had become strengthened and drawn into more than fraternal closeness by our long intercourse in the



wilderness, were mixed emotions of regret, pity, love, and admiration at a fate so horrible so heroically met.

The barbarous execution was no sooner over than we were conducted to the *portales* in front of the soldiers' quartel, and again placed under a strong guard of the regular troops. The sergeant appeared to have more kindness of heart than his fellows, as he gave one of my companions a blanket to spread upon the hard earthen floor which was chosen as our sleeping-place for the ensuing night. The young priest, who had called upon us in the morning, shortly made us a second visit, telling us that we need be under no alarm, as the governor had determined upon saving our lives unless we made an attempt to escape. There appeared to be an exceeding degree of delicacy, not only in the visits, but in the conversation of this young man, which denoted that he possessed finer feelings than either his master or the herd by whom he was surrounded. He was evidently a man of education, acquainted with the usages of the world; and his actions shewed that he was anxious to impress us with a belief in our own personal security, while scenes of the most sanguinary nature were going on around us. Often, on that eventful day, did recollections of the French Revolution pass through my mind. Armijo I could not look upon but as a second Robespierre, only requiring a field of equal extent to make him equally an assassin, a murderer, a blood-thirsty tyrant. His power, I knew, had been purchased by blood—I saw that it was sustained by blood. Human life he regarded not, so that his base ends were attained; and he would not shrink from sacrificing one man on the altar of his sanguinary ambition, if by so doing he could impress another with a due sense of his boundless authority and power to do whatever might seem meet unto him. The young priest was well aware that he knew the man Armijo, and hence his benevolent desire to quiet any apprehensions that might arise of our personal safety. It was this feeling which brought him to our prison before the first of our comrades was killed—the same humane motives actuated him in calling upon us after the murder of Howland. But to return to my narrative.

From the time of our first arrival in San Miguel that morning, to the death of Howland, the plaza had been nearly filled with armed men. Two pieces of artillery, badly mounted and every way ineffective, were standing imme-



diately in front of our quarters, in the porch. These cannon were drawn by oxen, the animals yoked and hitched, but lying down after a hard march from Santa Fé and quietly ruminating within ten yards of us. Immediately after the execution of Howland, detachment after detachment of mounted men left the plaza for Anton Chico, where we now learned that Captain Sutton and Colonel Cooke, with their men, were encamped. Next the two pieces of cannon were dragged off in the same direction, surrounded and followed by a motley collection of Indians, and badly-armed, half-naked, wretched Mexicans, whom Armijo dignified with the title of *rural militia*. By the middle of the day the town was completely deserted, except by the women and children, and some two hundred of the chosen troops and friends of the Governor; for, great warrior as he was, he contrived to keep the prudent distance of some thirty miles between himself and the Texans, so long as they had arms in their hands. The plans of the very valiant and most puissant Armijo were laid with consummate skill so far as his own personal safety and that of his property were concerned. He had now surrounded Colonel Cooke with at least a thousand of his men, while there were but ninety-four Texans in all. In case the latter defeated the Mexicans—and Armijo trembled and feared lest they should—his plan was to retreat to his residence at Albuquerque as fast as picked horses would carry him, and then, after gathering all his money and valuables, make his escape into the interior of Mexico. With these intentions he remained behind at San Miguel, and there anxiously awaited the news from the little frontier town of Anton Chico.

The command of the troops, acting against Colonel Cooke, Armijo had assigned to his few personal friends—toadies and sycophants whom he always has about him, and for whose adherence he pays a good round sum. He well knew that nine-tenths of his people inly hated and despised him, and were also inclined for an immediate annexation to Texas; he knew, too, that they feared *him*, and that nothing but their extreme ignorance and timidity had prevented them, years before, from throwing off his yoke. So long as they were commanded by officers in his pay, he felt confident that he could make a show, if not a fight with them, and he felt equally confident that if parade, fair promises, and treachery, could induce the Texans to lay down their arms, he could



still retain his ascendancy. Such was his policy, such were his plans, and fate decreed that they should prove successful.

From some of the soldiers of our guard, we gathered, during the day, full particulars of Howland, and his unfortunate companions. They had reached the settlements some three weeks before us, when Armijo, suspecting their intentions, and the object of their mission, had them arrested at San Miguel, and sent to Santa Fé. From this place they effected their escape three or four days before we were arrested. Until their recapture they had been secreted in the mountains between the two places, travelling by night only, and using every exertion to reach Colonel Cooke, of whose approach they had heard from their guard at Santa Fé.

Armijo immediately sent out large parties to retake them, being extremely anxious that they should not reach the Texans, and give information of his plans. On the morning of September the 17th, they were fallen in with on the side of a mountain, near San Miguel, by a company of Mexicans, ten times their number. Although armed only with pistols and swords, which they had taken from their guard when they effected their escape, they still made a brave and vigorous resistance. Rosenbury was killed on the spot, and Howland and Baker were not taken until severely wounded, and weak from loss of blood. The latter was the man we saw shot a short time before Howland, the bandage over his face prevented us from recognising him. He could not speak Spanish, and the tyrant Armijo ordered him to death without even saying a word to him. Howland, on the contrary, was well known in New Mexico, having lived in Santa Fé several years before. The Governor offered him his life and liberty—the same terms Lewis accepted—if he would betray his companions, and assist him in capturing them. The brave and noble-spirited man rejected the offer with scorn, and notwithstanding the disgraceful mode of his execution, his death was an honourable one. Grecian or Roman history, or the heroic deeds of later days, can hardly furnish a parallel to that of Howland—to that of one who fearlessly met the most terrible death conceivable, rather than betray his friends.

The bodies of the murdered men were allowed to remain where they had fallen until near night, a large pack of dogs



congregating around them, licking their blood and tearing their clothes. They were then taken to a prairie near the town, denied a burial, and were finally devoured by wolves!

Several Mexican officers called at our quarters during this eventful afternoon, among them a puffy, bloated, sallow-faced wretch, named Manuel Pino. He rode a beautiful and spirited black horse, of which he was so proud that he was continually galloping and fretting him about the square, and spurring him to the execution of such curvettings as would most induce a rattling of his sword, spurs, holsters, and the other jingling appointments of a Mexican horseman. Ever and anon he would dash up to our quarters, throw himself heavily from his truly gallant animal, recount some exploit which he vainly hoped might excite our admiration. He said that he had not only begged, but prayed Armijo to allow him to lead a charge against our friends at Anton Chico, but that the governor would not consent that so brave a man should leave his side for a moment. In short, this fellow took such particular pains, on all occasions, to impress us with a belief in his prowess and bravery, that we finally became thoroughly convinced of his being an arrant coward; and after circumstances fully justified our opinions.

Not only Pino, but the other Mexican officers attached to the personal staff of Armijo, informed us that a nephew of the latter, in company with Lewis, had departed for Anton Chico with the hope of bringing the Texans to terms. They also said that our friends were surrounded by more than a thousand of the best troops in New Mexico, and that reinforcements were hourly reaching the spot; and they even went so far as to assure us that, if they did not surrender quietly, our own lives would be sacrificed by a lawless and unrestrainable mob—anything but a consoling assurance to men who were perfectly confident that our friends would never surrender without a desperate struggle. That they did not come to the country to make war upon the inhabitants we well knew; we were equally well convinced that such men as Colonel Cooke, Dr. Brenham, Captain Sutton, and the brave spirits under their command, would not tamely submit to be deprived of their arms and made prisoners, intrenched, as we had been informed they were, in a ravine, and so fortified that they could easily defeat



ten or even twenty times their number of such cowardly and badly-appointed men as they would have to contend with.

The hours flew swiftly by, couriers constantly departing to, and arriving from, Anton Chico. At one time it was represented to us that a dreadful battle was raging—then, that the parties would come to terms. At sundown, a Mexican came riding into the square with the intelligence that the Texans had all surrendered. Instantly the air was filled with *vivas*, and in ten minutes we received a visit from the governor's secretary and the brute Manuel Pino, corroborating the news. They said the terms were an unconditional surrender; but this we could not believe. Even at this time it was suggested by one of our little party that if Colonel Cooke had surrendered without a terrible fight, treachery had done the work, and that Lewis was the instrument; but such was our confidence in the man that a majority of us could not believe he had turned traitor.

It was but too apparent, however, that our comrades had been taken. Nothing was heard, in any quarter, but rejoicings and congratulation. Shouts of "Long live the Mexican Republic!" "Long live the brave General Armijo!" "Long live the laws!" and "*Death to the Texans!*" were heard on every side, and these were followed by discharges of musketry, ringing of bells, blowing of trumpets, and such music as may be produced by cracked mandolins and rickety fiddles when execrably played upon. A *Te Deum* was in the mean while sung in the church, a short distance from the plaza, and the guardian saint of the place, San Miguel, with all his finery, feathers, and wings, was dragged from his resting-place to take part in the show. Fandangoes were got up in the different houses on the plaza, a drunken poet was staggering about singing his own hastily-made up verses in praise of Armijo, taking his pay, probably, in liquor—all went perfectly mad, and spent the night in riot, revel, and rejoicing. A grim, swarthy sentinel, with a face hideously ugly, was stationed directly in front of the little porch where we had cast our weary limbs. As if to add to the general din, he howled forth the dismal "*Centinela alerta!*"\* every ten minutes during the night, and his cry appeared to be the signal for some six or eight others, stationed

\* Sentinel, be on the look-out, or alert.



in different parts of the plaza, to join in the doleful chorus. This startling watchword I thought the most discordant, grating, and hideous sound that had ever greeted my ears. Drawled out to a distressing length by a voice hoarse, cracked, and scarcely human, and then caught up in different parts of the square, by men who appeared emulous of making a still more doleful and wo-begone noise, and I, all the while ignorant of its import—what with all these hellish orgies and cabalistic sounds in our ears, and with all the startling and horrible incidents of the day in our minds, it may be imagined that we slept but little that night.

The shouting, firing, ringing, dancing, and carousing, were kept up until morning; and why? Because some fifteen hundred or two thousand cowardly wretches had succeeded in capturing ninety-four half-starved Texans—not by the intervention of battle or military strategy, but by the blackest piece of treachery to be found on record.



## CHAPTER XV.

New Quarters.—Our Party taken before Armijo.—Appearance of Armijo.—Description of our Prison.—The Zapatero's Wife.—Dress of the Females of New Mexico.—Description of the Reboso and Mantilla.—Colonel Cooke's Men marched through San Miguel.—Change of Quarters.—Prison Occupations.—Arrival of Caravans from the United States.—A Mexican Loafer.—Tomas Bustamente. Thomas Rowland.—Bustamente sent on a Mission to Lewis.—Its Unsuccessful Result.—Bustamente's Trickery found out.

On the morning which followed the night described in the last chapter, we were taken to new quarters in another part of the town, where a small room was provided for our prison. We had barely time to examine our new quarters before the governor sent a guard to escort us to his lodgings at the priest's house. On being brought before him, we found the great man surrounded by his principal officers, both military and civil, and from their obsequious manner it was evident enough that Armijo's power was supreme.

The governor did not rise as we entered his room, but still waved his hand with great natural dignity and politeness, and bade us good morning with a frankness and cordiality which he well knew how to assume. Remarking that he was aware, from our appearance and Howland's declarations, of our being *caballeros* or gentlemen, in our own country, he ordered his officers to make room for us on the different boxes and trunks scattered about the room. He asked several questions in relation to General McLeod and his party, said that he was going immediately with all his force to meet him, and that if the Texans resisted, every one of them would be killed. He next spoke of the strength of New Mexico, its great resources, the prowess and daring bravery of himself and the resistless soldiers under his command, and drew such a ludicrous picture, and relieved it with such a tissue of bombastic fanfaronade, that we could hardly maintain our gravity. If we had not met and



seen the brave soldiers of whom he spoke, his words might have gone for something ; but the whole of them had passed in review before us, and

“ Such a tattered host of mounted scarecrows,  
So bare, so withered, famished in the march,  
That their executors, the greedy crows,  
Flew hovering o’er their heads, impatient for  
Their lean inheritance ! ”

In short, such a motley, half-naked, ill appointed, set of rag-amuffins constituted his army, that we could with difficulty believe that the great Armijo was not quizzing us in his grandiloquent description.

After a little commonplace conversation Armijo next gave special directions to the old alcalde of San Miguel that we should be well treated, that all our wants should be provided for, and that no one could insult or impose upon us without incurring his most fierce and vindictive wrath. He then dismissed us, remarking, as we were leaving the room that if one of us attempted to escape during his absence life should be the forfeit.

We were then marched back to our new quarters, and a very small guard placed over us—a guard we could at any time have seized upon, tied neck and heels, and locked in our own prison. Scarcely had we returned to our *carcel* before a blast from one of Armijo’s trumpets announced his immediate departure ; and ere the sounds had died away, the great man and his followers dashed past us, evidently going some hundred yards out of his way for no other purpose than to give us one more opportunity of seeing him. His appearance was certainly imposing, even unto magnificence. On this occasion he was mounted on a richly-caparisoned mule, of immense size and of a beautiful dun colour. In stature Armijo is over six feet, stout, and well-built, and with an air decidedly military. Over his uniform he now wore a *poncho* of the finest blue broadcloth, in-wrought with various devices in gold and silver, and through the hole in the centre peered the head to which the inhabitants of New Mexico are compelled to bow in fear and much trembling. Armijo is certainly one of the best-appearing men I met in the country, and were he not such a cowardly braggart, and so utterly destitute of all moral principle, is not wanting in the other qualities of a good governor.



On his departure, San Miguel, which ordinarily contained some two or three hundred able-bodied men, was left with scarcely a dozen, he having dragged away with him every one old and active enough to carry a lance or bow and arrow, in the direction of the great prairie, to meet the force under General McLeod.

The room assigned us as a prison was immediately adjoining the little *adobe* church of San Miguel, with its small belfry and clear-sounding bell, and its rude turret surmounted by a large wooden cross. Had this room not been completely overrun with *chinchés*, which, when night came, issued from every crack and crevice in the walls in myriads, it would have been very comfortable. Our guard was soon on the most sociable terms with us, allowing us to sit in front of our door, and kindly doing any little errand which might add to our limited stock of comforts. In the room adjoining ours, the two doors not being four yards apart, lived a Mexican family, the head of which was a *zapatero*, or shoemaker. His wife was a young, chatty, well-formed woman, and had not one side of her face been marked by a large, ugly red spot, would have been exceedingly comely. Two thirds, at least, of the women we had seen were more or less disfigured by these deep-red marks; and we could not but think that nature, in this mountain climate, had dealt unkindly with them. Not for one moment did it occur to us that these red blotches, which frequently gave the countenance an expression absolutely hideous, had been placed there by other than the partial fingers of nature. I knew that fancy frequently led the votaries of fashion to strange and most unseemly lengths, but I could not believe that in her wildest caprice she had instituted such revolting adornments for "the human face divine."

On the following morning, it appeared to us that the mark on the face of our female neighbour had changed its position. Not a little did we marvel at this; for all were sure the spot had been on the opposite cheek the day before, and still we could not believe that it was other than a mark she had carried from her birth. Early on the third morning she appeared before us with a face not only fair, but very pretty—not a spot or blemish to be discovered. At first we did not recognise her, but on inquiring, we found that all the spots which had so much disfigured her had been placed there by herself, the juice of some red berry being used for



the purpose. We told the Senora Francisca that she looked much better *plain*, and without those extraneous ornaments, and after this she *beautified* herself no more. The custom is universal among the females of New Mexico, and when there is no weed or berry that furnishes a deep-red tint, they use vermillion, or even a reddish clay. How they can imagine that these vile marks improve their appearance, it is difficult to conceive, and the fact can only be accounted for upon the principle that there is no accounting for taste. The belles of New Mexico appear to be ignorant of the aphorism that "beauty when unadorned is adorned the most."

The dress worn by the females of Northern Mexico, in fact all over the country, is a cotton or linen chemise and a blue or red short woollen petticoat—frequently, among the more wealthy, the latter is made of a gaudy, figured merino, imported expressly for the purpose. These simple articles of raiment are usually made with no little degree of neatness, the chemise, in particular, being in many cases elaborately worked with flowers and different conceits, while the edges are tastefully decorated with ruffles or laces, if it lies within the power of the wearer to procure them. On first entering the country, the Anglo-Saxon traveller, who has been used to see the gentler sex of his native land in more full, and perhaps I should say more becoming costume, feels not a little astonished at the Eve-like and scanty garments of the females he meets; he thinks that they are but half-dressed, and wonders how they can have the indelicacy, or, as he would deem it at home, brazen impudence, to appear before him in dishabille so immodest. But he soon learns that it is the custom and fashion of the country—that, to use a common Yankee expression, the women "don't know any better." He soon looks, with an eye of some leniency, at such little deficiencies of dress as the absence of a gown, and is not long in coming to the honest conclusion, as the eye becomes more weaned from the fastidiousness of early habit and association, that a pretty girl is quite as pretty without as with that garment. By-and-by, he is even led to think that the dress of the women, among whom fate, business, or a desire to see the world may have thrown him, is really graceful, easy—aye, becoming: he next wonders how the females of his native land can press and confine, can twist and contort themselves out of all proportion, causing



the most gracefully-curving lines of beauty to become straight and rigid, the exquisite undulations of the natural form to become flat or angular, or conical, or jutting, and all in homage to a fickle and capricious goddess—a heathen goddess, whose worshippers are Christians! He looks around him, he compares, he deliberates—the result is altogether in favour of his new-found friends.

Among the Mexican women, young and old, corsets are unknown, and, by a majority of them, probably unheard of. I travelled nearly seven hundred miles through the country, without seeing a single gown—all the females were dressed in the same style, with the same *abandon*. The consequence any one may readily imagine: the forms of the gentler sex obtain a roundness, a fulness, which the divinity of tight lacing never allows her votaries. The Mexican belles certainly have studied, too, their personal comfort in the costume they have adopted, and it is impossible to see the prettier of the dark-eyed *senoras* of the northern departments without acknowledging that their personal appearance and attractions are materially enhanced by the *negligé* style. Moore's beautiful lines to Nora Creina appear to apply especially to the Mexican girls, for their dress certainly leaves

“ — every beauty free  
To sink or swell as Heaven pleases.”

But by all this the reader must not understand that the traveller sees no full-dressed ladies in Mexico. In the great city of the Montezumas, in fact in all the larger towns where foreigners and French milliners have settled, he sees them habited after the fashion of his own land, although he cannot but notice that a large portion of those so attired feel constrained and ill at ease under the infliction. I have seen, in one of the larger cities, a lady with the body and sleeves of a fashionable frock hanging dangling at her back, without even attempting to conceal what many would call a gross departure from all rules and reasons.\*

\* Since my return to the United States I have been informed, by traders who have visited Santa Fé, that many of the women of that place have adopted the *tunica*, or gown. The fashion was first introduced, as is almost invariably the case, by a French woman. Her name was Madame Tule, or Toulouse, or something of the kind. How she happened to stray so far from comfort and civilization as Santa Fé, or by what road she reached it, is a matter of which I am



Bonnets are never worn, either by rich or poor, high or low ; but in their stead the *mantilla* and *rebozo*, more especially the latter, are in general use among all classes. The latter is a species of long, narrow scarf, made of cotton, and in a majority of cases figured with two colours only, blue and white. These indispensable articles in the toilet of the Mexican female serve not only the uses of parasol and bonnet, but also of shawl, veil, and workbag. The manner of wearing them is extremely graceful—sometimes upon the head, at others over the shoulders, and again round the waist, with the ends hanging across the arms ; in the streets they are worn almost invariably over the head, and so archly and coquettishly does the fair Mexican draw the *rebozo* around her face, that the inquisitive beholder is frequently repaid with no other than the sight of a dark and lustrous eye peering out from amid its folds.

The ends of the *rebozo* are frequently used as an apron, to carry any little articles that cannot be held in the hands, and seldom is a female seen without one of them, from the extreme north of Mexico to its southern-most boundaries. From childhood it is worn, and long habit has so accustomed them to its use that it is not laid aside when engaged in common household labour.

It is really surprising with what facility the Mexican females perform their household duties encumbered by this garment. An American lady would as easily manage her affairs with her hands tied behind her back as with the *rebozo* about her, yet it is never in the way of the Mexican. The *mantilla* resembles it in many respects, but is made of finer material, rather wider, and worn more among the fashionables in the larger cities. An extremely beautiful ornament it is, too, when worn with that peculiar grace which no other than the lady of Spanish origin can affect.

The more striking beauties of the women of Northern Mexico are their small feet, finely-turned ankles, well-developed busts, small and classically formed hands, dark and lustrous eyes, teeth of beautiful shape and dazzling

ignorant ; I only know that she visited the place, opened a monte, or gambling-house, and set the fashion of dress to the belles. The traders, as a matter of policy, favoured the introduction, as it afforded them a more ready market for the sale of silks, satins, and calicoes. By nearly the same means the fashion has spread as far as Chihuahua.



whiteness, and hair of that rich and jetty blackness peculiar to the Creole girls of Louisiana, and some of the West India islands. Generally their complexions are far from good, the mixture of Spanish and Indian blood giving a sallow, clayish hue to their skin; neither are their features comely, although frequently a face may be met with which might serve as a perfect model of beauty. But then they are joyous, sociable, kind-hearted creatures almost universally, liberal to a fault, easy and naturally graceful in their manners, and really appear to have more understanding than the men. Had we fallen into the hands of the women instead of the men, our treatment would have been far different while in New Mexico.

During our tedious and annoying confinement at San Miguel, we were visited by every girl in the town, and from the *ranchos* in the vicinity. Each time they brought us some little delicacy to eat; and if ever men came near being killed with kindness, we were the victims. One party would arrive with a dish of *chile guisado*, and olla podrida, or hash of stewed mutton, strongly seasoned with red pepper, and really excellent when well made. Scarcely would this party leave us before another would come in, bringing *atole* and *miel*; others milk, eggs, tortillas, or bread. Of all these different dishes we were obliged to partake, or wound the feelings of our kind-hearted friends; and the consequence was, that we were frequently compelled to swallow a dozen meals a day for the first week or two of our imprisonment. That we did fair justice to the hospitality of the women, I am frank to confess, for our previous long starvation had given us most excellent and not easily appeased appetites; but if "*enough* is as good as a feast"—and an old adage says that it is—I can argue from experience that *too much* is worse even than a brief famine, when personal comfort is taken into consideration. No slight can be greater than the rejection of any eatable proffered by a Mexican girl; and so numerous were our *levées* at San Miguel, that we were frequently employed half the day in paying due honour to our *presentations*.

It was on the afternoon of the 17th of September that Colonel Cooke and his men surrendered themselves at Anton Chico. On the morning of the 20th these betrayed and unfortunate men passed through the edge of San Miguel on their long and gloomy march towards the city of



**Mexico.** We were not permitted to see them, but were informed by the women who visited us, that they had been stripped of nearly everything, and were badly treated in every way.

At this point of my narrative—for I cannot find a more fitting place—I will give my readers an account of the agency Lewis had in inducing our companions to surrender their arms at Anton Chico. To shew him in his true colours, I will make a few extracts from a statement of the particulars of the surrender made by Lieutenant Lubbock, one of Captain Sutton's officers. Lieutenant L. was taken to the city of Mexico with the rest of the party, but while confined in the convent of Santiago, made a daring escape by leaping from a balcony in the second story, and afterward succeeded in reaching Texas in safety.

It seems that the day after the small party which I accompanied, consisting of Howard, Fitzgerald, Van Ness, and Lewis, left the large sheepfold on the Gallinas, the main body of the Texans took up the line of march, and travelled as far as Anton Chico. They did not enter the town, but encamped on the edge of a ravine within some two hundred yards, a strong position in case of attack, with an abundance of water running almost at the very feet of the men. Three or four of the Texans, who crossed the river, and entered the small town to purchase provisions, were arrested by Dimasio Salezar, who was then encamped at the place with several hundred men. Salezar immediately sent one of them back to Colonel Cooke and Dr. Brenham, with a request that they would come over to the village and hold a consultation with him. These officers very properly sent back word to him that if he wished to see them he must come to *their* camp. He came over, and the conference resulted in the liberation of the men. Colonel Cooke then asked Salezar what had become of Van Ness, Lewis, Howard, Fitzgerald, and myself. He answered that he had met us, was satisfied with the objects of the mission as we had explained them, had treated us as friends, and sent us on to the governor. That night, according to Lieutenant L., Salezar was reinforced by a hundred and fifty men, but the rest of his account of the surrender I will give in his own words.

“About ten o'clock on the morning of the 17th of September, it was determined to take up the line of march,



when a message was received from Captain Salezar, stating that Governor Armijo would arrive in a few hours, and that, as an evidence of his friendly disposition, he would cross the river that intervened between our encampments, and encamp near us. As he took up the line of march, our men were formed to receive him *en militaire*, and in a proper manner. He marched, however, entirely around our line, and took his position within two hundred yards of us, having received farther reinforcements, and now numbering about four hundred men. We were then dismissed, but with orders to be ready to seize our arms at a moment's notice. In about fifteen minutes we perceived a party of about a hundred and fifty or two hundred men, advancing to our right and rear. This gave cause for a suspicion of danger, and Colonel Cooke immediately ordered Captain Sutton to form the men for action. In five minutes, battle to the death would have been commenced — but some one exclaimed that Captain Lewis was at the head of the party. The order was therefore given to stand at ease, the advancing party uniting, in the mean while, with the party in our front. We then perceived Captain Lewis advancing towards us, with another, whom we afterward ascertained to be the nephew of the governor. Lewis told us that the people were exasperated at our coming, and were in arms; that, in addition to the six hundred troops before us, he himself had seen four thousand of the best-equipped men he had ever met with; that they were on the march, and would be on the ground in a few hours. He farther stated that five thousand men were marching from Chihuahua, and were expected daily, but that the governor had commissioned him to offer, if we would give up our arms, permission to come in and trade, and that at the end of eight days they would be returned to us, together with our recruited horses. He farther stated that *he knew* this to be the custom of the St. Louis traders visiting Santa Fé, that no possible harm would result from such a course, and for the truth of these statements Lewis pledged *his honour*. It was observed, during the conference, that Lewis, in his language, disconnected himself from us, using continually the pronoun *you* instead of *we*. This aroused the suspicions of one of the officers, who proposed that we should return to our companions as we came; and if we could not do better, walk, and live upon the horses we had left. The nephew of the



governor replied that such a course would never do; that his uncle knew Americans were gentlemen, and that such inhumanity could not be permitted towards them; and again urged us to accept the proposition, and comply with the requisitions made upon all traders visiting Santa Fé. They then started for their camp. While our officers were in consultation, one of them reminded Colonel Cooke of the peculiarity he had observed in Lewis's conversation, and told him that his suspicions were aroused, for the very countenance of the man foreboded evil. Colonel Cooke went after Lewis, and held a private conversation with him. On returning, he said that the officer must be wrong, for Lewis had pledged to him his masonic faith for the correctness of his statements. *That day our arms and equipments were taken from us.*

“We were among strangers—destitute of the very necessities of life—broken down physically, and well-nigh mentally—two hundred and fifty miles from our companions, and there were no means on the route of supporting nature in an effort to reach them; added to all these, we had the assurance of one of our companions, who had ever been considered a man of honour—we had his plighted faith, that we were among friends, and would be treated accordingly. Could we, would any one, have done otherwise than capitulate upon the terms offered? It is painful to denounce one with whom I have associated as a brother officer and a fellow soldier, upon a dangerous expedition, one whom I have looked upon as a man, as a Texan; it is painful, I say, to denounce any one thus situated as a villain and traitor; but the facts are too conclusive—William P. Lewis betrayed his associates to a cruel and inhuman enemy. He has the mark upon his forehead; and will yet be found, recognized, and punished, as the Judas of the nineteenth century.

“Just before dark we were ordered to form, and then Mexican faith began to shew itself. While we were forming, however, the treachery of Lewis becoming apparent, Colonel Cooke called to him, and in the hearing of his betrayed, as well as of his newly found associates, denounced him in language which, if he had any soul at all, must have reached it. He reminded him of his pledged honor, which had been forgotten—of his plighted masonic



faith, which had been broken—and declared that but for him his former associates would have died in the ditch.

“After we were formed, our knives, watches, and indeed every article of personal property were taken from us, together with all our baggage except one blanket each. We were then formed double file, marched near the *rancho*, or town, and then encamped for the night with our guards all around us.”

Such is Lieutenant Lubbock's account of the agency of Lewis in inducing the surrender of his former friends and companions. The same officer then goes on to speak of the arrival of Armijo on the day after the surrender, saying that the petty tyrant was much exasperated on seeing that the betrayed prisoners were not tied. By his orders they were then bound—four, six, or eight together, as many as the different lariats would confine. The cries among the more open friends of Armijo, during this operation, were, “*Kill them! Kill them! Death to the Americans!*” After nightfall a consultation was held by the officers more immediately in the interest of Armijo, and directly within hearing of the Texans, as to the propriety of either executing them all upon the spot or sending them forthwith to the city of Mexico, as trophies of the valour of the New Mexicans. The party in favour of the latter course prevailed by a majority of only *one vote!*

The day following that on which Colonel Cooke and his comrades were marched through San Miguel, we petitioned the old alcalde for a change of quarters, the room we were then occupying, although comfortable in every other respect, being so completely overrun with *chinchés* and other vermin, that it was impossible to sleep at night. After we had waited with great impatience two days, and passed two more sleepless nights, the old fellow finally procured us a clean and comfortable room directly on the plaza. A hint from Van Ness, to the effect that Armijo should be made acquainted with the kind of room the old alcalde had furnished us, probably induced that functionary to hasten our removal. When once established in our new quarters our time passed more agreeably. Our only occupations were eating, drinking, sleeping, chatting with the girls who made us daily visits, and speculating upon our past reverses, our present position, and future prospects. At dark we



would build a fire, for the evenings were now cool among the mountains, and then probably spend half the night in song and story. Each one of our little party had a checkered experience to relate, and the recital of some ludicrous adventure would bring forth a peal of uproarious laughter, much to the astonishment of the little knot of Mexicans congregated among us, who could not conceive how prisoners, in the power of such a man as Armijo, could indulge in such boisterous mirth. For myself, I must say that I have never laughed more heartily than while confined in that little prison house on the plaza of San Miguel; and could our anxious friends have been spirited into that wild and romantic land, and permitted to eavesdrop under the walls of our carcel on some of those evenings, they could hardly have deemed us other than a party of merry fellows holding a jolly carousal.

But with all this hilarity, thoughts of an escape frequently entered our minds. The members of our guard, who manifested the greatest astonishment at our indifference to imprisonment, we could at any time have captured and tied, and with their bows and arrows, and a German double-barrelled gun in their possession, we could next have taken the town of San Miguel with the greatest ease. On several occasions, so careless was the guard, we made trials of skill with them with the bow and arrow, Major Howard beating the best of them at a game which may be considered their own; but even with their arms in our possession, where were we to go? Had we known then, what we afterward ascertained, that so many dreary months of toil and captivity were in store for us; had we been aware that by forced marches we could have reached Bent's Fort in three or four days, we might have made the attempt. There was no one however, to give us advice, no friend without to aid us in an undertaking of the kind, we knew nothing of the country, and thus we were compelled to give up all thoughts of an escape, at a time when the chances of its successful result were altogether in our favour. With the knowledge we have since gained, I doubt whether the same party could be safely kept another month in San Miguel, at least with so weak a guard, under like circumstances.

We had been but a week in our new quarters before a caravan arrived direct from St. Louis, owned by one of the Chevas family, a rich and powerful connection in New



**Mexico.** Chavez, himself, in a neat buggy wagon, accompanied his men. I could not help reflecting, while gazing at him in the plaza, upon the difference of treatment he had experienced in the United States from that I had met with in his country, knowing, as I did, that my feelings and intentions on entering the latter were precisely the same as his on first setting his foot on that soil where I claimed citizenship. I would cheerfully have endured a month's extra imprisonment for an opportunity of making known my reflections and feelings to Chavez: but this might not be—he did not come within speaking distance.

Three or four days after Chavez passed through San Miguel, another caravan, made up of Americans, on their way to California, arrived from St. Louis, and after resting themselves for one day, again took their departure for their new homes, west of the Rocky Mountains. Anxious as we were to converse with these men, and gather news of the world without, from which we had now been cut off more than four months, we were forbidden the privilege. The alcalde undoubtedly had his orders not to allow any intercourse, and scrupulously did he obey them.

Following close upon the heels of this party of Americans, or but three or four days later, came still another caravan, belonging to Mr. Samuel Magoffin, a native of the United States, but at this time a merchant of Chihuahua, who was now on his way to that city with more than forty wagons heavily laden with goods. Mr. Magoffin sent us word, through a Mexican, that he had had an interview with Armijo, who had granted him permission to visit us; but as he had not brought a written order to that effect, the old alcalde would not allow him even to approach within a hundred yards of our prison-house. By the same messenger we were informed that we need not be under the least apprehension for our lives; and, in addition, he brought the positive assurance that I was shortly to be liberated, the Governor not having any charges against me, and not wishing to detain me after the termination of his expedition against the party of 'Texans now approaching under General McLeod. 'This was good news; too good, as I then justly thought, to be true, although, at that time, I have little doubt Armijo intended to give me my liberty, and would have done so, had it not been for Lewis.

From Mr. Magoffin we received a generous supply of



coffee and tobacco, luxuries more welcome than anything he could have sent us. The old alcalde furnished us regularly with tortillas, atole, and, occasionally, with an earthen pot of boiled mutton; but, as we had saved our money, we had the means to purchase occasionally a fat sheep, eggs, good bread, and any little necessary we might wish for; and now that we had coffee and tobacco, and had no employment save the dressing and cooking of our meals, we fared most sumptuously. We contrived to manufacture excellent pipes of corn-cobs; for stems we were indebted to a monkey-faced Mexican, named Juan Sandobal, who brought us some branches from a small bush growing upon the river bank, the pith of which could be easily extracted. This fellow Sandobal was a regular loafer in and about our premises, ready at any time to mend our shoes, run on errands, wash our handkerchiefs, or play us a rude air on a cracked mandolin, of which he was the proprietor, and all "for a consideration." He invariably contrived to cheat us in every transaction we had with him, and we, as invariably, made it a point to tell him that we considered him an arrant knave; yet the fellow had made one trip with the traders to St. Louis, spoke some half dozen words of English, and as he had associated on the road with Americans, in the capacity of servant, made bold to call us his *amigos*, or particular friends. There was no such thing as getting rid of his importunities; hints he would not understand, and kicks he appeared to look upon as little innocent familiarities between intimates. Our principal out-door agent, when his time was not otherwise occupied, was Tomas Bustamente, the same personage who purchased the sheep for us on the morning after our first arrival at San Miguel. Don Tomas as we called him, was always bringing us information of all the movements of Armijo, and was ready at any time to make up a story in case nothing had occurred that might in any way interest us. For us he always manifested the greatest friendship; and as he was a specious, honest-seeming, and open-countenanced fellow, accommodating to a fault, and with far more integrity than Sandobal even pretended to, to him we always intrusted our important commissions. All our little purchases were made by him, and with such scrupulous exactness did he give us the price of every little article bought, and so honestly did he return us our change for the money we placed in his hands, that for a long time



we gave him credit for being a perfect *rare avis* among the lower classes in New Mexico—an honest man. But an unfortunate accident—unfortunate, at least, for Don Tomas—completely overthrew our good opinions of him.

I have before mentioned that an American merchant of San Miguel, Mr. Thomas Rowland, had been arrested by Armijo, about the time when Howland was first taken, and that his goods and effects had been confiscated. We had been confined but a couple of weeks before Rowland was released, his effects were given up to him, and he had once more opened his store. Some half dozen times a day our countryman passed within a few yards of our prison, yet was not allowed to communicate with us by word, or even gesture. We knew the circumstances of his arrest, and the constraints under which he laboured; yet I am confident we were indebted to Rowland for many little favours, and I have little doubt that he sent us many luxuries which never reached us, all through the rascality of Tomas Bustamente. The little circumstance, which brought this fellow out in his true colours, I will here relate.

Hearing that our former companion, Lewis, was at a rancho, but a few leagues distant, and not knowing at this time of his traitorous conduct, Van Ness and Howard dispatched Bustamente to see him, in the hope that we might gain news, or at least obtain a change of linen, our entire wardrobe now consisting simply of what we had on our backs. As a token that Van Ness had sent this fellow, he placed a ring upon his finger which Lewis well knew, and which would convince him that there was no deceit in the transaction. This was early in the morning. At night, our agent returned unsuccessful from his mission, saying that he had been unable to find Lewis, or obtain our much-needed supply. While we were regretting the unsuccessful termination of an attempt, which we had fondly hoped would give each of us a clean shirt, if nothing more, Don Tomas casually remarked that the Senora Rowland had accidentally seen the ring sent by Van Ness, and had taken a great fancy to it, at the same time desiring him to ask whether it could be disposed of, and the price. So plausible was this story, that not one of us suspected fraud; and as it was impossible to *sell* the ring, valuable as it was, to one who had constantly been sending us many little delicacies, it was at once despatched to her as a present, accompanied by the usual



ceremonious compliments. This little incident over, nothing more was thought of the ring, and we filled our pipes, and began smoking and talking over the unfortunate result of our mission to Lewis.

Than our pipe—our homely oblivious pipe—we found no greater solace during the many hours of affliction. Far be it from me to say that any pipe is preferable to a cool finely-flavoured Havana, or that I esteem it under ordinary circumstances; but in a time of adversity and trial, when the mind has no employment but to brood over unavoidable misfortunes, there is more real comfort, more forgetfulness of the present to be drawn from even a cob pipe; well filled with Virginia tobacco, than from any cigar that has ever been twisted since the day when Sir Walter Raleigh was supposed by his servant to be on fire, and deluged with a flood of cold water. If any of my readers do not credit this assertion, let them ask old campaigners, those who have had abundant experience, and from whose judgment there is no appeal—in the woods. I know that I have drawn much solid comfort from a pipe, and puffed away many weary hours of captivity.

The evening following the return of Don Tomas from his unsuccessful trip, one of our female visitors remarked that the ring Senora *Bustamente* had received from Van Ness was a beautiful present, and that she was so extremely proud of it that she was shewing it about among all her acquaintances! Here was a discovery, and it was almost unnecessary to say that after this Don Tomas fell most essentially in our esteem. We did not let him know, however, that we had detected him in his little swindling operation. He was useful in doing errands, and, probably, took as little toll out of our money as any of the natives would have done. His delinquency, too, taught us all a useful lesson—it proved to us that the most specious and honest-seeming, among this class of Mexicans, had their tricks and failings, and that the best men among them were worthy of close watching.



## CHAPTER XVI.

**Arrival of a Party of our Companions as Prisoners.—Great Excitement in San Miguel.—Don Antonio Baca.—“Old Paint” Caldwell, and nine of his Men, brought in Prisoners.—A Mexican Procession.—More of San Miguel, the Patron Saint.—Startling Information.—General Mc Leod, and other Texans, brought into the Plaza.—Mr. Falconer.—Arrival of all the Prisoners.—Dreadful Appearance of the Texans.—A Visit from Lewis.—More of his Treachery and Rascality.—His Departure for Santa Fé.—A Veritable History of Don Manuel Armijo.**

We had now wiled away some eighteen or twenty days in our prison-house at San Miguel, and were anxiously awaiting news of General Mc Leod's party and of Armijo's success with this second band of Texans, when Bustamente came hurriedly into our apartment, just as we had finished a late breakfast, and informed us that three or four of our companions had been taken, and were then coming into the town. A crowd of women, girls, and boys, congregated upon the neighbouring house-tops, and around the door of the alcalde, on the opposite side of the plaza, soon convinced us that something had occurred to disturb the ordinary quiet which reigned in San Miguel.

We hurried through the door of our room to a little porch, which was our prison limits, anxiously eyeing every figure within view to see if we could discover an acquaintance. Soon a small cavalcade of ragged Mexicans, guarding two mules, upon each of which a couple of men were packed, were seen turning the corner of a street leading into the plaza—the same street by which we had first entered the town. At first we were not near enough to distinguish the faces of the prisoners, but after they had been halted at the door of the alcalde we made them out to be Lieutenants Scott and Burgess, young John Howard, a brother of the major who was a prisoner with us, and the Mexican servant named Matias, whom Colonel Cooke had sent back to the



prairies, from the Angosturas, with the guide, to conduct General McLeod to the settlements. We bowed to our friends, and made signs and gestures that we knew and would like to converse with them; they returned our distant salutations in kind, but farther intercourse than this was not allowed by our guards. After remaining a short time at the alcalde's, our friends were sent to a rancho, some three miles from San Miguel, and there quartered in the family of a kind-hearted old Mexican, named Don Antonio Baca, a man who had frequently visited us during our imprisonment, and who had never called without bringing us eggs, or some little delicacy. Although we had been denied the satisfaction of conversing with our friends, and learning something of their own movements, and the position and prospects of the main party, it was still a source of congratulation to know that excellent quarters had been provided for them. Don Antonio had two or three daughters, pretty, and accomplished too, for that country; we afterward learned that one of them formed an ardent attachment—fell in love, in more common parlance—with one of our young friends, and was affected even to tears and hysterics when he was ordered to the city of Mexico. It is said that no attachment can be stronger, no love more enduring, than that of the better-informed Mexican doncella, when once her heart is touched by the blue eyes, light hair, and fair complexion, of some roving Anglo-Saxon. She may not “live and love for ever,” as did a certain maid mentioned by some poet; but she loves as long as she lives, and that is long enough, in all reason.

A day or two after the party of Texans I have just referred to were conducted through the town, another party numbering ten, also arrived. They were prisoners, and had the good fortune to be quartered at the house of our old friend Vigil, the man who had saved our lives when we were first captured by Salezar. We did not see this party, but from descriptions given us of their leader, by our guard, and the girls who visited us, we felt confident he could be no other than “Old Paint” Caldwell, the well known leader of our spy company, and in this conjecture we were not wrong. Bustamente informed us that they had been taken prisoners by a large party of Mexicans, south of the Angosturas, and that the main body of the Texans was rapidly approaching. We at once came to the conclusion that the two small parties of our friends, now in prison near us, had been sent



on in advance, and, as in our case, had been overpowered by numbers, and forced to give up their arms.

A most unwonted excitement was now created in San Miguel. The rumours rife among the people were, that the much-dreaded Texans, whom Armijo had taught them to look upon as so many bloodthirsty cannibals, were advancing in countless numbers, threatening the country with fire, devastation, and the sword. The wax figure of the patron saint of the place, San Miguel, or St. Michael as it is rendered in the English, was dragged from his niche in the little church, mounted upon a large platform, and carried about in procession. A more comical figure than this same San Miguel it would be difficult either to imagine or discover. I cannot say that his saintship had ever been tarred, but he had certainly been feathered from head to foot. From his shoulders hung listlessly a pair of huge, ill-constructed wings, his face was that of a large doll, while his head, to complete the ludicrous *tout ensemble*, was covered with a lace cap of the fashion of our grandmothers. Another figure, intended to represent the Virgin, but nothing more than a doll of the largest size, was carried in state upon the same platform, and over all was a canopy of faded yellow and pink satin, trimmed with fringe, spangles, and tassels. The platform rested upon a litter formed upon two long poles, upon which were nailed cross-pieces, and into these cross-pieces were inserted four loose, rickety legs, hardly firm enough to sustain the wax and feathers, satin and spangles, which reclined above them. Whenever the procession was about to move, the entire fabric would be lifted from the ground, and the ends of the poles placed upon the shoulders of four men.

I will endeavour to give my readers a programme of this singular procession. First came an old, baldheaded priest, a coarse, dirty blanket tied about him with a piece of rope, an open prayer-book in his hand, a rude wooden cross hanging from his neck, and a pair of spectacles on his nose which my companions at first insisted were leather, but which afterward proved to be of glass, about the size of common tea-cups, and set in wide rims of buffalo horn. Following close at the heels of this odd figure came our particular friend, Juan Sandobal, strumming his crazy mandolin, and digging from it the only tune within his musical scope. By his side walked a brother artist, zealously sawing away upon a rusty violin, the softest tone from which would have set Ole Bull



or Wallace raving mad. As each of these performers knew but one tune, and as both were playing at the same time, the reader who may have an ear to detect a crack in a piece of china by the ring, can easily imagine the effect produced by such a mixture of anything but sweet sounds. On either side of the musicians, as flankers, walked half a score of ragged, dirty-faced urchins; then came the four men bearing the car, the patron saint in a sitting posture in front, and his head, either from being hung on a pivot or from having become loose in some way, bowing and bobbing to the multitude like the figures of Chinese mandarins in some of the tea-shops. Nothing could be more grotesque and laughable than this comical head of St. Michael, enveloped in an old-fashioned lady's cap, and rising and falling with every motion of the car upon which it was borne. On the same platform, and immediately behind the figure I have just described, stood the Virgin, dressed in pink satin and spangles, as stiff and inanimate as wood and wax could make her. In the rear of the car followed the women, children, and rabble generally of the town, the faces of a majority of the girls stained either with vermillion or the juice of some red berry, and many of them presenting an appearance truly hideous.

At different points of the plaza the procession would halt, the bearers of the car would set down their burthen, and all would kneel and cross themselves while the old priest read a sentence from the open book before him. One of the principal stopping-places appeared to be directly in front of our little window, and solemn as the affair was intended to be, it was impossible for us to retain our gravity with two such figures as the old priest and the patron saint staring us in the face. Those huge spectacles of the former alone would have drawn a smile from the gloomiest misanthrope that ever lived; and then the comical aspect of the droll figure of San Miguel—waggish in more ways than one, for while it wagged its head it also had a quaint and knowing leer about its eyes—whenever this counterfeit presentment of the saint was brought fairly in sight, we lost our gravity entirely, and were compelled to turn aside to conceal our laughter.

After the procession had knelt in front of our prison, the old priest would call upon every saint in the calendar in general, and San Miguel in particular, to aid the populace against, and protect them from, the vile horde of heretics and barbarians marching against their country. All would ther



respond by crossing themselves and giving utterance to groans, the *band* would next strike up, and the procession then move slowly to some other point, there to repeat the same ceremony. In this way the time passed, from the day on which the ten prisoners alluded to a few pages back arrived at San Miguel, to the 9th of October.

At an early hour on the morning of the 9th, our guard gave us the startling information that all the Texans had been captured in the vicinity of the Laguna Colorada, or Red Lake, a body of water some thirty or forty miles south of the Angosturas. At first we could not believe this news, but it was soon confirmed by the ringing of bells, general congratulations and rejoicings, and by a grand procession in honour of the victory. Again was the patron saint of the town mounted on the car, accompanied by the ever-attendant Virgin, and borne about in triumph through the plaza and all the principal streets. Nothing could exceed the joy and enthusiasm of the inhabitants. The only gun in the place—the double-barrelled German affair I have already mentioned, and which had been used to guard and terrify us—was now brought into requisition to give greater spirit to the rejoicing. The fellow who had charge of this piece followed in the rear of the ragged rabble which formed the procession, and, as fast as he could load and fire, kept up an incessant cracking and banging, much to the delight, in particular, of a troop of graceless urchins, who hovered about him on the march. At each of the four corners, and at each of the four sides of the plaza, did the procession stop, kneel down, and publicly thank San Miguel for thus keeping his charge out of the hands of heretics, and all this while the comical image, now arrayed with an extra load of furbelows, feathers, and finery, bowed his acknowledgments to the crowd of ragged worshippers in a style which would have done credit to any merry-andrew.

Scarcely were these nonsensical mummeries over, before General McLeod and Mr. Navarro, with some ten or fifteen Texan officers and servants, were escorted under a strong guard into the plaza, and placed for safe-keeping in the old quartel we had occupied on the day when Howland and his comrades were shot. Mr. Falconer was seen in this little party by all of us, and although grieved to see him in a plight so gloomy, I was still rejoiced to notice that he was in good health. Some of the members of this small party of prisoners were



continually passing and repassing our room, within twenty yards of us, on their way to the river for water; they recognized and bowed to us as they passed, but we were not allowed to communicate with them in any way, and were consequently kept in ignorance of the terms of their surrender, and the disposition that was to be made of them.

On the 12th of October, two days after, the rest of the Texan prisoners, more than a hundred and fifty in number, were marched into the plaza. Worn down and emaciated by hunger and fatigue, their pale and haggard countenances shewed but too plainly that they had suffered dreadfully after we left them on the Palo Dura. The clothing of many of these poor fellows consisted of but a shirt and pair of pantaloons, and the single blanket which had been left them by the brave and "honourable" Armijo, was the poorest they were the possessors of at the time of their capture. They were all taken to a room on the opposite side of the square, and then huddled in like so many sheep in a butcher's pen!

Scarcely were these unfortunate men driven into their close and uncomfortable quarters, before Lewis, well mounted and extremely well dressed, rode up to our quarters, and took lodgings in the same house in which we were confined, although in a different room. He bowed to us as he passed our window, said that "all was right," and remarked that he would call and see us in a short time. The day wore away, however, without his fulfilling his promise, although he passed within a few yards of us several times. There appeared to be a sneaking and uneasy expression about the fellow, which we all remarked; yet we could hardly believe that he had been playing a treacherous and unmanly game.

After dark, on the same day, Bustamente came into our room, and declared, positively, that I was to be released by Armijo so soon as all the prisoners had been sent off to the city of Mexico, that being their destination. This information he had from the principal priest of San Miguel, who has the reputation, among the Americans, of being an honest and worthy man. From what Bustamente could learn, by listening to the conversations of the officers attached to the staff of the governor, he was of opinion that Howard, Van Ness, and Fitzgerald, my three companions, would be taken by Armijo to Santa Fé, and shortly liberated. The same story



was told by several Mexicans who visited us during the evening—that I was to be liberated was certain.

On the following morning the wagons—the same wagons with which we had set out, more than four months before, from Austin—were drawn up in a line in the plaza of San Miguel, and immediate preparations were made for dividing the goods of the Texan merchants. As the merchandise was unloaded, Lewis was seen by all of us standing by the side of Armijo, and frequently pointing out a box or bale of goods, which was placed in a large pile, apparently for him. All the while he appeared to be on excellent and most social terms with the governor and the Mexican officers, and was plainly seen and heard laughing and joking with them. How the abandoned man could carry out his villainy, and act thus in the very faces, as it were, of his betrayed associates, is a mystery to me.

The distribution of the goods continued nearly the whole of the day, each company of the valorous warriors of Armijo receiving a share of the plunder in proportion to the time they had been in service against the Texans. In the mean time, four of our men, a gunsmith, a blacksmith, a musician, and the hospital steward of the expedition, were liberated by Armijo, and from our window we could see them walking about at liberty. They were not allowed to communicate with us, however, in any way. The governor wanted the services of these men—his only reason for giving them their liberty.

Lewis frequently passed our window on the 14th and 15th of the month, but not once did he offer to speak to us, although he always bowed as he went by. That the man had been acting badly we had now little doubt, but the extent of his treachery was far from being suspected. After dusk the last-mentioned day a nephew of Armijo called in to see us. He spoke of my release as a measure fully determined on by his uncle, and also gave it as his opinion that my three companions would be set free.

At an early hour on the following morning, and for the first and only time, Lewis entered our room. There was a hang-dog expression, if I may so call it, about him, which denoted that he had committed some base action, and it seemed as if he could not look one of us in the face. He, however, tried to convince us that he was glad at having the opportunity, at last, of calling to bid us good-by, assuming an openness and frankness of demeanour which but ill be-



came him. Howard asked him how it happened that the two main parties of Texans had surrendered without firing a single shot, to which Lewis gave an evasive and stammering reply. He was then asked by what means he had been fortunate enough to obtain his liberty: a question he answered by saying that the governor, for some reason unknown to him, had given him his release without his even asking for it. He then added that I was to be set free on the following morning; and, after telling my companions that he had already made every endeavour to procure their release, and that he would have one more interview with Armijo upon the subject, he hurriedly shook hands with each of us and departed. Five minutes afterward, as we learned from several visitors, he was on his way to Santa Fé, without having gone near the governor.

It may appear singular to many of my readers, that we did not at once suspect Lewis of having played a treacherous game, especially with the evidence that the party under Colonel Cooke had not made even a show of resistance; but they should recollect that we were entirely cut off from all direct communication, and also that Lewis bore an excellent reputation, and was universally esteemed by all. Under these circumstances they will feel that we must have been slow to harbour suspicion against him. It is hard to suspect one with whom we have long associated on terms of intimacy, whose life had been unstained by a single bad act, of the blackest crime in the catalogue.

On the night before Lewis's departure for Santa Fé, a young Mexican called at our room and inquired the value of several gold pieces in his possession, among them English sovereigns, French twenty-franc pieces, and different American coins. He spoke broken English, and we afterward ascertained that Lewis had recommended him to some of our poor prisoners as a trustworthy fellow. They had given him this money, a pittance they had contrived to secrete when they were searched and robbed by Armijo, on his promising that he would procure them small silver change for it. The young scoundrel, with all this money in his pockets, left for Santa Fé the next morning, in company with Lewis—*per nobile fratrum*.

Another circumstance has been related to me by the sufferers themselves, which goes to shew that to treachery Lewis added the most pitiful swindling. Two members of



the expedition, one of them named Farley, and belonging to the company of which Lewis was captain, the other a Mr. Houghtaling, a merchant, had succeeded, during the search made at the time of the surrender, in secreting their watches, both of them valuable. With this fact, Lewis became acquainted, and just before starting for Santa Fé he called upon his quondam friends, and said that he would take their watches, and sell them for a heavy sum. He said they would need the money on the road, and that it would be impossible for them to dispose of the watches after leaving San Miguel, but that, on the contrary, they would lose them if the Mexicans should by chance discover them about their persons. Farley was an intimate friend of the scoundrel, and gave him his watch with little hesitation. Houghtaling did the same. That was the last they saw of their property.

One other circumstance illustrative of his character, and I have done with Lewis for the present. While at Chihuahua, on our march to the city of Mexico, I saw a copy of *La Luna*, a small paper published there. It contained a letter from Armijo to Garcia Condé, governor of Chihuahua, in which, after stating that he had been successful in capturing all the Texans, he added: "In consideration of the great service rendered by Captain W. P. Lewis, in assisting me to capture these Texans, I have given him his liberty and his goods, and earnestly recommend him to the notice of the Central Government." When it is known that all the goods Lewis had with him he could carry in his hat, it is more than probable that the governor hired him to claim a large portion of the merchandise, which he afterward divided with him, and thus defrauded the government, to which he was obliged to render an account of all the spoils taken.

The history of this petty, yet most absolute and despotic monarch, Armijo, is singular, and as I happen to have the materials at hand, no matter to him how obtained, I will here present my readers with a brief yet truthful sketch of his career, from his boyhood upward. However much he may be amazed at seeing his own history in veritable print, he cannot but acknowledge that I have done him ample justice—that his portrait is drawn with strict fidelity in every particular.

Manuel Armijo, the subject of the present memoir, as the story-books commence, was born of low and disreputable parents, at or near Albuquerque, a town of no inconsiderable



importance, some sixty miles south of Santa Fé. From his earliest childhood his habits were bad. He commenced his career by petty pilfering, and as he advanced in years extended his operations until they grew into important larcenies. While yet a youth, he carried on an extensive business in sheep-stealing, admitted, I believe, to be the lowest species of robbery; yet so lucrative did the young Armijo find the business, that in his own neighbourhood he gave it a tone of respectability. A wealthy *haciendero*, or large plantation owner, in the vicinity of Albuquerque, named Francisco Chavez, suffered not a little from the exceedingly liberal system of helping himself adopted by the embryo governor. Chavez possessed his thousands and tens of thousands of sheep, large numbers of which he yearly drove to the southern cities of Mexico, and there disposed of for ready cash. At home, his business was to purchase at reduced prices all the sheep offered by his poorer neighbours, and so numerous were his flocks, that he could not mark, much less recognise, one tenth of what he possessed. Yet he always employed shepherds to watch his flocks, and used every precaution in his power to prevent his sheep from straying or being stolen.

But to guard against a person of young Armijo's tact and perseverance was impossible. The scape-grace would enter his flocks while the shepherds were asleep, or suborn them if awake, and by much shrewd artifice contrived to levy a continual and profitable tax upon the substance of the elderly *haciendero*. The animals thus stolen, in good time would be sold for cash to their rightful but unsuspecting owner, and thus it sometimes happened that Armijo would re-steal and re-sell, time after time, the same identical sheep. Up to this day, when among his intimate friends, General Manuel Armijo boastingly relates the exploit of having sold to "Old Chavez" the same ewe *fourteen different times*, and of having stolen her from him even in the first instance. By this means, and by having what is termed a good run of luck at dealing *monte*, he amassed no inconsiderable fortune, and as his ambition now led him to learn to read and write, the foundation of his future influence and greatness among his timid and ignorant countrymen was substantially laid.

As it would fill a volume to trace all Armijo's steps, I will at once jump from the sheep-folds of Chavez and the monte table, and take him up again after he had been



appointed *Administrador de Rentas*, or principal custom-house officer at Santa Fé, in the year 1837. It is proper to mention that, during this hiatus, somewhere between the years 1825 and 1830, he had been, by a federal appointment under the old territorial laws, clothed with the executive authority in New Mexico, and that his short administration was signalised by acts of cruelty and reckless injustice. In consequence of some misdemeanor, he was soon deposed from his place at the head of the customs by the then governor, Don Albino Perez, and another person was appointed in his stead.

The effects of the central form of government were now just beginning to be felt in this isolated department of Mexico, and the people were beginning to manifest no inconsiderable discontent at the new order of things. Armijo, perceiving that there was now a chance, not only to signalize himself, but to reap a rich harvest of revenge against his enemies then in power, took advantage of this feeling by secretly fomenting a conspiracy. An insurrection was soon in agitation, and early in August, 1837, a heterogenous force, numbering more than one thousand men, among whom were a large number of *pueblos*, or town Indians, assembled at La Canada, a village about twenty-five miles north of the capital. Governor Perez conducted a small force against the insurgents; but a majority of his men went over at the outset, leaving him with only twenty-five personal friends to contend with odds the most fearful. A slight skirmish told the story: one of his men was killed, two were wounded, while the rest fled precipitately towards Santa Fé. The insurgents pursued them to the city, from which they were obliged to flee; but they were captured the next day, and fourteen of them, including all the officers of state, were most inhumanly put to death. Among the slain were three brothers named Abreu: Governor Perez was also butchered in the suburbs of Santa Fé, his head cut off, and kicked about the streets by the populace. His body remained where it had fallen, a prey to the vultures and wolves, no friend daring to offer it sepulture!

Shrewdly conjecturing, now that he had raised a whirlwind, that he might easily direct the storm to his own personal advancement, Armijo, after the manner of his great prototype, Santa Anna, suddenly left his hacienda, and made his appearance at Santa Fé. There he found everything in a state of frightful anarchy—the place in the hands of an



ignorant mob, and the American and other foreign merchants in hourly expectation that their houses and stores would be sacked, and even their lives taken. The rabble dispersed, however, committing no other outrage than electing one of their own leaders, an ignorant and unlettered fellow, named José Gonzalez, governor of New Mexico. They paid no attention to the claim set up by Armijo, the fomentor, as he had exposed himself in no way to the anticipated hard blows and knocks which had given them the ascendency.

Foiled in his ambition, Armijo once more retired to his hacienda, a fine estate he had purchased at Albuquerque, with the proceeds of his cheating, stealing, and gambling transactions. But an active and ambitious mind like his could not long remain inert. Through secret intrigues, he managed, after the lapse of three or four months, to organise a counter-revolution, and collecting a numerous force, he declared in favour of Federalism, and marched towards Santa Fé. He took quiet possession of this place, as Governor Gonzalez, finding himself without an army, had fled to the north. The latter was soon enabled, however, to rally around him no inconsiderable mob; but Armijo, in the mean time, had received heavy reinforcements from the south, and succeeded in routing Gonzalez without loss, taking him and many of his principal men prisoners. The unfortunate governor was immediately shot, and four of his chief officers met with the same fate, by order of Armijo. The latter were put out of the way, more, it is said, to prevent disclosures, than for any crime they had committed; for they had been Armijo's confidential emissaries in the formation of his original plot.

The ambitious tyrant, now that his enemies were either murdered or dispersed, reigned supreme in New Mexico. One of his first steps was to bribe the army to proclaim him governor and commander-in-chief; his next, to send off a high-coloured account of his own exploits in favour of Federalism to the city of Mexico, and no officer can more adroitly adopt the high-sounding fanfaronade style in wording a despatch or an address than Manuel Armijo. Such disinterested patriotism, such love of the confederacy, and such daring bravery as he had manifested, could not go unrewarded, and a return of post from Mexico brought documents confirming him in his station of governor, with the additional title of colonel of cavalry. The sheep-thief is now rising in the world!



The year 1838 passed off without any event of great importance—Armijo still governor, and ruling his vassals with a rod of iron. In the early part of 1839, without a shadow of law or authority, he deposed all the custom-house officers and appointed his own brother and his other creatures in their stead, in order that he might have the exclusive control and management of the customs in his own hands. He next, without regard to the federal tariff, established an arbitrary duty upon all merchandise entering from the United States—500 dollars upon each wagon-load, without reference to the quality of the goods it might contain, or their value. To some of the traders, whose wagons happen to be heavily laden with the finer kinds of merchandise, this singular imposition is exceedingly favourable; while to others, with light or not valuable loading, it is equally oppressive.

From the material which I have at hand, I could give a connected detail of weekly acts of cruel injustice and the most glaring partiality. Fénelon's graphic picture of a bad ruler has a living and faithful counterpart in the present governor of New Mexico. Foreigners are the especial objects of his hatred; and acts and decisions affecting the well-being of his whole province are as often founded upon a feeling of hatred towards a small class, or, perhaps, some luckless individual who has excited his jealousy or fallen under the ban of his most unaccountable caprice, as upon a sentiment of justice and necessity. Still oftener do his acts of public administration have their source in some private advantage to which he has a single eye—it may be in the furthering of some libertine and lustful scheme that would disgrace the veriest roué in Christendom. Still, there is not that overt demonstration of malice towards foreigners that he daily makes towards his own cringing and servile countrymen. He is afraid of Anglo-Saxon blood, and he seeks to spill it by protecting the knife of the secret assassin, or by influencing, to most outrageous decisions, his farcical courts of law. Not unfrequently do his own lusty sinews find congenial employment, in the open streets of Santa Fé, in wielding the cane and cudgel about the ears of his native subjects, and never yet has one been found bold enough to strike back. He raps them over the scone with more impunity, because with vastly less sentiment, than did Hamlet the grinning scull of "poor Yorick."

Out of a multiplicity I will record two anecdotes, in order to illustrate his system of righting wrongs. The first came



near resulting in a serious quarrel between the American residents and the governor, and the difficulty was only avoided by the latter abandoning his objectionable ground. An American named Daley was wantonly murdered at the gold mines near Santa Fé, by two ruffians engaged in robbing a store which he was keeping at that place. The murderers, through the energy of foreigners, were soon apprehended, and fully convicted of the crime; but as they were Mexicans, and had only shed the blood of a heretic, were permitted to go unwhipped of justice. In July, 1839, these murderers were again arrested through the interposition of the Americans, and a second time brought to Santa Fé for trial. The friends of the murdered man now drew up a petition to the governor, in the most decorous language, praying him to mete out full justice to the assassins. Armijo, although he knew full well the justice of their prayer, affected to believe it a threat against his authority and government—a conspiracy! Upon this pretence he immediately collected all the militia he could raise, and made preparations for one of his bravado demonstrations. The Americans, convinced that no justice could be expected from a tyrant so unprincipled, and fully understanding “the bluffing game” he had resorted to, at once, with characteristic spirit, prepared to defend themselves. Their firmness and cool determination frightened the cowardly governor and induced him to send them an apologetical communication, in which he protested that he had entirely misconstrued the petition, and that their just request should have due attention.

In the year 1840, I think on the first day of January, two most respectable foreigners had the misfortune to kill a Mexican lad by the accidental discharge of one of their guns. They were returning to Santa Fé from the gold mines when the unfortunate accident occurred, and brought the body of the boy into town and at once reported the circumstance to the authorities. The principal alcalde consulted with Armijo as to the steps he should take, and the decision was, without form of trial, that the unfortunate foreigners should be put in prison and held responsible for murder, unless they could *prove themselves innocent!* This is a very common instance of the manner in which the potentate administers justice. But there was something in this case so palpably unjust, in the eyes of those who knew the men and the facts, as once



more to call out such manifestations of public disapprobation as induced him to retract so outrageous a sentence.

In the early part of February, 1840, a concurrence of two or three acts of most wanton injustice, conceived in cupidity and lust, came near resulting in revolution. Armijo is an extensive merchant, and it becomes a part of his policy to pay off the public dues in his own merchandise at most enormous profits. When it is remembered that he is at once governor, commander-in-chief, legislator, custom-house officer, auditor, treasurer, and judge, the practicability of this policy becomes apparent. Public creditors can get no money from the treasury because it is always bankrupt, or at least so represented, notwithstanding the custom-house receipts on importations are more than enough to pay the army, to which purpose they are especially set apart. On the occasion alluded to, some twenty regular soldiers, stationed at Santa Fé, were thrown into prison and loaded with irons as malcontents for refusing to receive their wages in corn from Armijo's granary at four dollars a *fanega*—a measure containing about two bushels—when they could purchase in the market for cash at one third of the price. This outrageous act of tyranny created an unwonted excitement against its author, so much so, that he found it necessary to resort to a specious kind of trickery, a display of disinterestedness, to allay the popular clamour. He advertised a contract to the lowest bidder to furnish the soldiers with corn. But this Mexican display of honesty neither deceived nor satisfied even his stupid countrymen; for they at once declared that no one but Armijo could take the contract at any price, as the insolvent government never paid any creditor but him. Thus the matter remained just as it had begun, and just as this most patriotic governor intended it should, with this exception—the manifestations of discontent became more open and threatening. Two young officers of the army, in particular, had fallen under the ban of the governor's displeasure before, and were now suspected of having used their influence in fomenting the disaffection that seemed universal among the soldiers. His hatred of these young and meritorious officers had its origin in an *affaire d'amour*, which, as it exhibits a new phase in the multiplex character of Armijo—multiplex in all that is corrupt and debasing—I will here relate.



Don Santiago Abreu,\* a minister in the administration of Governor Perez, and massacred in the former revolution, left a handsome, and, in such advantages as her country afforded, an accomplished daughter, Dona Soledad Abreu; a maiden whom fifteen summers had ripened into early womanhood. After Armijo's elevation, he insidiously beset the fair doncella with libertine intentions; but she proudly and scornfully resisted all his advances, fortified not more, perhaps, by a sentiment of intrinsic virtue than by the inveterate hatred she entertained for the governor. She knew that he had been the mortal enemy of her father—the undoubted instigator of his assassination—such a miscreant could find little favour with the pretty Soledad. But this great man was not to be so easily foiled, and attempted by intrigue what he had failed to accomplish in a direct way. He influenced a match between Dona Soledad and Esquipulas Caballero, one of his ensigns, and in the plenitude of his good-nature honoured their nuptials by officiating as sponsor at the ceremony.

He now renewed his vile importunities, and, as he supposed, with better prospect of success. He held, in a manner, the destiny of the young officer in his hands; but in every attempt to accomplish his unholy object he was most signally baffled. The maiden and the wife proved alike invulnerable to his solicitations and his threats. At last, convinced of the impregnable virtue of Soledad, he gave up the pursuit, and began making good the deep oaths of vengeance he had often sworn. Her he could not reach directly, but he found means to degrade her unoffending husband and her favourite uncle, who was also a young ensign in his army, named Ramon Baca. Ordering a grand review of the troops, with no other intention than to humble these young cadets, he publicly promoted to a rank above them several officers of inferior grade—a most galling slight in the eye of a young military aspirant, and a kind of vengeance worthy only of the great Armijo. He even promoted, from the rank of common soldier to a grade above them, a fellow who had been an agent and pander in many of his licentious transactions. The young officers, who were the most deserving and meritorious in the whole corps, now

\* I believe that this man was governor of New Mexico about the year 1832.



finding themselves at the tail of the army, presented a respectful petition to his excellency, praying to be reinstated. This so irritated the tyrant, that he threatened them with instant death if they ever ventured to molest him again with similar importunities, and Caballero, the husband of the pretty Soledad, upon affected suspicion of favouring the disaffected soldiers, was cast into prison with them and heavily ironed.

Baca, upon some frivolous charge, was ordered out of the country. The 9th of February was the day fixed by the governor for his banishment; but when the time came the young man declared to his friends that he would not depart, but would raise an insurrection and sacrifice his and their oppressor, or perish in the attempt. With a sword at his side he promenaded the streets of Santa Fé during the forenoon, with great boldness walked directly under Armijo's windows and held conferences with the soldiers. Without a friend to inform him of the young officer's intention, Armijo remained in utter ignorance of the plot; yet the inhabitants were all aware of the intended revolution, and anxiously awaited an outbreak they deemed inevitable. But the good fortune of the despot did not desert him in this extremity. Had a single blow been struck, his power and his oppressions would have ended; for, whenever the star of his destiny tends downward, it will gravitate with a velocity vastly accelerated by the universal hatred in which he is held by his subjects; but when called upon by the heroic Baca the soldiers at first hesitated, and then declared that they would render him no assistance. They had promised to aid, to join him; but either from lack of confidence in him as a leader, or from craven fear of Armijo, they were deterred from an open demonstration. Thus was this embryo revolution, which gave such excellent promise, crushed through the timidity of a handful of soldiers.

In the afternoon young Baca mounted his horse, and riding to the barracks, made a short speech to his brethren in arms. It was a farewell address, couched in decorous terms, and at its conclusion the really gallant officer departed on his exile. But by this time Armijo had obtained information of the contemplated revolt, and immediately sent off a detachment of dragoons with orders to bring back the young officer, dead or alive. He was overtaken, and thinking himself betrayed by the soldiery, quietly gave up his arms, was guarded back



to Santa Fé, and thrust into the same dungeon with his friend Caballero. At first it was thought that Armijo would order them to immediate execution; but fearing the populace, among whom they had so many friends, he finally sent them off to the city of Mexico to be tried for treason, himself to furnish all the proof. The father of young Cabellero, a brave and meritorious officer, but broken down by age and dissipation, was carried to the door of Armijo to intercede for his son; but the tyrant denied him an audience. The shock was too much for the old man: he was borne to his home only to be carried thence to his grave, and his loss was much lamented by both foreigners and natives.

The young officers were released on reaching Chihuahua, and afterward visited the city of Mexico with the hope of obtaining redress. They were unable to effect anything, however, for by the time they were allowed a hearing the Texan expedition to New Mexico began to be agitated, and the aspect of affairs at Santa Fé was now too critical for the General Government to think of tampering with her tyrannical governor.

In his rude *palacio* at Santa Fé he is more the despot than anywhere else, maintaining himself proudly, and enforcing all the regal homage and courtly ceremonial exacted by the veriest tyrant. A guard, musket on shoulder, marches before the entrance to his door, denying entrance to all unless they have first obtained the royal permission. Should his excellency feel in the humour of walking out, the cry from the *centinela* is "The governor and commander-in-chief appears!" and this is echoed and re-echoed from every guard in and about the barracks. When his majesty is in the street, each dutiful subject takes off whatever apology for a hat he may have on his head. Should the governor's wife, a gross, brazen-faced woman, issue from the building, the form is even more ridiculous, for then the cry of "*La gobernadora!*" or "*La commandante generala!*" resounds on every side. This woman is contaminated with every depraved habit known to human nature; and as her husband is a debauchee by "special prerogative," she does not scruple to act as his *alcahueta* in all his amours. In the mean time she is not without her own lovers—a worthy couple, truly!

It is strange how this man has been able to maintain his despotic and arbitrary sway among a people acknowledging no law but that of force. The inhabitants are far more



dissatisfied with his administration than they were with that of Perez and his cabinet of Abreus; yet so far they have dared to do no more than plot revolutions against their oppressor. He continues to hold sway in a country where he has not a real friend upon whom he can depend; even his sycophantic favourites would prove his bitterest enemies were he once in adversity. Could the Texans have entered New Mexico in a body, with plenty of provisions, Armijo would have fled with his ill-gotten wealth, and the newcomers would have been hailed by all parties as deliverers.

I might diversify this hasty biography of Don Manuel Armijo, from the abundant material which I have yet by me unused, with stories of his atrocious acts that would bring a blush upon the brow of tyranny. I might detail many horrible murders which he has committed. I could relate many a thrilling story of his abuse of the rights of women, that would make Saxon hearts burn with indignant fire; for Saxon hearts enshrine the mothers of men as objects sacred and apart. I might speak of his conniving with the Apache Indians, in their robberies of his neighbours of the State of Chihuahua, by furnishing this hardy mountain tribe with powder and balls and guns, knowing that with them they would fall, like the eagle, from their fastnesses, upon his own countrymen. I could give a catalogue of men's names whom he has banished from their own families and homes, for no reason but because they were in his way. Assassinations, robberies, violent debauchery, extortions, and innumerable acts of broken faith are themes upon which I am armed with abundant and most veritable details; but my readers would sicken, and my narrative leads me another way. A few remarks and I have done with him.

The mien and deportment of Armijo are not ill calculated to strike a timorous people with awe; for, as I have before remarked, he is a large, portly man, of stern countenance and blustering manner. Not one jot or tittle of personal bravery does he possess, but is known to be a most arrant coward. In all the revolutions that have taken place since he first courted power, his own person has never been exposed, if we except one instance. In a skirmish with some Indians he received a wound in the leg, from which he still limps; but the action was not of his own seeking, and his conduct on this occasion was that of a man engaged in a business anything but to his liking. He has made great capital, however,



of his crippled leg, and, like his great exemplar, Santa Anna, is determined that his subjects shall never forget that he received it while encountering their enemy. But the master-stroke of this great man was the capturing the Texan Santa Fé Expedition. These small squads of tattered soldiers, taken piecemeal, in his grandiloquent bulletin he multiplied into a legion of Buckramites—for which act of most heroic daring he was, all in good time, knighted by Santa Anna. He knows his people thoroughly, having studied their character with a most acute discernment. A common remark of his is, “*Vale mas estar tomado por valiente que serlo*”—it is better to be thought brave than really to be so—and thus by blustering and swaggering, he keeps the timid natives in subjection.

It may be thought singular that no attention is paid to Armijo's tyranny by the general government ; but his policy is only part of that which has obtained in many of the departments. In our own confederacy, we regard intelligence as the great bond of union ; the reverse is the case in Mexico—a sufficient test to prove that the so-called Republic is no Republic at all. To General Manuel Armijo I will now bid adieu ; but I cannot do it without again saying, that, however much he may be astonished at seeing his portrait thus taken, he cannot urge a single syllable against its fidelity.



## CHAPTER XVII.

Arrival of "Old Paint."—Stories of Suffering.—Armijo and Lewis.—Departure for the City of Mexico.—The Brute Salezar in Command.—Bustamente and the Women of San Miguel.—Causes of the Failure of the Santa Fé Expedition.—Sufferings of the Prisoners from Cold.—Arrival at Pino's Rancho.—Horrible Threat of Salezar.—San Domingo.—Kindness of the Women.—San Felipe.—Algodones.—A Second "Black Hole of Calcutta."—A singular Rite.—Alameda.—Bottoms of the Rio Grande; their Fertility.—Albuquerque in Sight.—Lieutenant Hornsby abducted.—Arrival at Albuquerque.—The Family of Armijo.—Farther Kindness of the Women.—General Pike's Journal.—The Pretty Girl of Albuquerque.

I awoke on the morning of the 17th of October with full confidence that I had passed my last night in prison. Neither myself nor my companions thought it could be otherwise. I had received assurance after assurance, from every quarter, that as soon as the Texans were on the march, an order for my release would be made out and issued by Armijo; and so sanguine were my illusory hopes that such would be the case, that the evening previous I had spent in speculations as to my future movements. On leaving New Orleans, in the preceding May, I had fondly anticipated reaching Santa Fé by the 1st of August, at farthest, and the city of Mexico by the 1st of October, after having seen all the "sights" between the two points. It was now the middle of the latter month, a period so late in the season as to render my returning to the United States, by the way of Bent's Fort and Independence, impracticable, so that I should be forced, as I then thought, to go as far as Chihuahua, at least, into the interior of Mexico. From that point I determined, if it would facilitate my journey home, to leave the main route to Mexico and travel directly to Matamoros. I even made my calculations, in case Armijo would not give up my horse, to purchase him of his present owner if possible: or if I was disappointed in once more obtaining possession of this tried



and faithful steed, I at least determined upon purchasing a large and untiring mule which had belonged to Van Ness.

A larger brood of unhatched chickens has probably never been counted. When the sun had appeared above the eastern summits of the mountains which environ San Miguel I was ordered to march, with my three companions, to the quarters occupied by the main body of 'Texan prisoners. Our meeting was an occasion of strong and diverse emotions—joy once more to shake the hands of those with whom we had shared the perils and hardships of the prairies, gloom to see those friends in plight so miserable.

But a few minutes elapsed ere "Old Paint" Caldwell, with his nine comrades, was escorted from the house of our friend Vigil and placed in line with the other prisoners. A low but cordial shout of welcome arose on the still morning air as the men saw the veteran approach, and warm were the greetings as he shook hands with the eager crowd that pressed around him. Question followed question in such quick succession that no time was given to answer; stories of suffering and of wrong were broken off half finished, in such haste was each man to unbosom his rapid crowding thoughts. The burden of the stories on every side was of starvation, murdered friends, and broken Mexican faith, mixed with deep curses upon the head of Lewis, whose perfidy was by this time generally known.

Before these first greetings were over, Lieutenants Scott and Burgess, with young Howard, were escorted in from the rancho of old Antonio Baca. Here was another meeting of deep joy alloyed with melancholy; the latter had a brother among us, and all had warm friends. My friend Falconer too, reduced in flesh, but still preserving the full measure of his buoyant spirits, we found in the crowd.

Even up to this period I had not lost all hope of being liberated; Armijo had released four of the Texans, then why not me? He had all my papers in his possession—documents proving incontestably that I had no part or lot with the expedition, he had been fortunate enough to capture—and with such proofs in his hands, upon what grounds could he detain me longer? He had none other than his arbitrary will—the supreme law of New Mexico. But whatever hopes I might have entertained, up to this time, of being released, they were now banished on seeing the four Texans



who had for several days enjoyed unconditional liberty, marched in among us. They knew not the cause, could divine no motive which might have induced Armijo to this singular step, unless Lewis was at the bottom of it. At one moment the governor had liberated these men, and assigned them all lucrative situations; they had scarcely tasted the sweets of freedom before they were again arrested, brought in, and penned with their imprisoned comrades. Not a doubt exists, that to Lewis, these four men, as well as myself, were indebted for months of suffering, peril, and imprisonment: the traitor probably thought that we had found out and would make his treachery known to the Americans at Santa Fé, and thus render the place too hot for his comfort or safety. He had a certain influence with Armijo, which he might have used for the melioration of our lot; but the same cowardly impulse which urged him, by base means, to save himself from the Mexicans, now caused him, in a more traitorous way, to save himself from his own countrymen.

After we had been paraded in the plaza of San Miguel, and the ceremony of counting us had been gone through, it was ascertained that the notorious Salezar—the greatest brute among Armijo's officers—was to have charge of us. This was considered unfortunate by all, and even our old friend Bustamente, who came up to bid us farewell, privately took occasion to manifest his regret that such a cold blooded wretch was to have charge of us. The women too, who had been so kind to myself and companions while in San Miguel, now came up and shook our hands for the last time, many of the girls affected even to tears at the gloomy prospect before us, and openly warning us to beware crossing Salezar in any of his demands or wishes. The beginning of a cold and disagreeable winter was at hand, as we set off on foot upon a journey of over *two thousand miles*—we were in the hands of a brute whose only delight was in cruelty and blood—should we be fortunate enough to withstand the fatigues attendant upon the journey, an uncertain fate awaited us at its termination; thus, with hope lending hardly a gleam of sunshine to the dark clouds before us, the reader can easily imagine that our condition was gloomy in the extreme.

And what mistake had brought this sorrowful issue to our enterprise? In as few words as possible I will answer the



question. In the first place, the expedition began its march too late in the season by at least six weeks. Had it left Austin on the 1st May, the grass would have been much better, and we should have had little difficulty in finding good water both for ourselves and cattle. In the second place, we were disappointed in obtaining a party of the Lipan Indians as guides, and were consequently obliged to take a route some three hundred miles out of the way, and in many places extremely difficult of travel. Thirdly, the government of Texas did not furnish wagons and oxen enough to transport the goods of the merchants, and this, as a matter of course, caused tedious delays. Fourthly, cattle enough on the hoof were not provided, even with the second supply sent for by the commissioners from Little River. Again, the distance was vastly greater than we had anticipated in our widest and wildest calculations, owing to which circumstance, and an improvident waste of provisions while in the buffalo range, we found ourselves upon half allowance in the very middle of our long journey—a privation which weakened, dispirited, and rendered the men unfit for duty. The Indians also annoyed us much, by their harassing and continual attempts to cut off our small parties and steal our horses. Finally, the character of the governor of New Mexico was far from being understood, and his power was underrated by all. General Lamar's estimate of the views and feelings of the people of Santa Fé and the vicinity was perfectly correct; not a doubt can exist that they all were and are anxious to throw off the oppressive yoke of Armijo, and come under the liberal institutions of Texas; but the governor found us divided into small parties, broken down by long marches and want of food, discovered a traitor among us, too, and taking advantage of these circumstances, his course was plain and his conquest easy.

Far different would have been the result had the expedition reached the confines of New Mexico a month earlier, and in a body. Then, with fresh horses, and a sufficiency of provisions for the men, the feelings of the inhabitants could have been ascertained; the proclamations of General Lamar would have been distributed among them; the people would have had an opportunity to come over to Texas without fear, and the feeble opposition Armijo could have made, and I doubt whether he would have made any



against the Texans in a body, could have been put down with ease. Had it been evident that a majority of the inhabitants were satisfied under their present government, and unfriendly to a union with Texas, then the goods would have been sold, and the force withdrawn—at least, such was the tenour of the proclamations. No attack would have been made upon the inhabitants—that was expressly understood; but had Armijo seen fit to commence hostilities, his power in New Mexico would have been at an end. Fate decreed otherwise, and by a series of unforeseen and unfortunate circumstances the expedition was thrown into his hands.

To return to our present gloomy situation. A guard numbering nearly two hundred men, mounted upon horses, mules, and asses, and miserably armed with bows and arrows, lances, or worthless muskets, rode upon either side of us, single file, as we trudged along on foot. We had questions innumerable to ask each other, and during the day I learned from Mr. Falconer and others the particulars of their journey across the Grand Prairie,\* and of their capture. The story was one of great hardship and suffering. The implacable Caygüas had harassed them continually, killed several of their men, and at one time rode directly through the camp, and succeeded in *stampeding* no less than eighty-seven horses, which were never recovered. When we left them, on the 31st of August, it was thought that they would hear from us at farthest by the 10th of September, but the 15th of that month came, and still no tidings. On that day a council of officers was held, at which it was determined to wait five days longer, and then, if no news should be received of Colonel Cooke's party, it was resolved to burn the wagons and goods, and make the best of their way back to Texas by forced marches, living upon their horses and mules, after the beef should have been exhausted, until they could reach the buffalo and hunting range. Unfortunately the guides sent back by us, after we had passed the Angosturas, reached General McLeod's encampment on the 17th of September, when immediate orders were given to resume the march towards Santa Fé.

\* By this name I designate the immense prairie we crossed after ascending the *steppe*, or chain of high hills, west of the Palo Duro. It is the *Llano Estacado* of the New Mexicans.



To shew how unfortunate had been our choice of route, after leaving the main party on the Palo Duro, it is sufficient to say that the guides we sent back traversed the distance in three days and a half—whereas it had taken us fourteen. The distance must have been, by their route, nearly two hundred miles; yet by travelling night and day they were enabled to make their journey in the short time mentioned. The guides, too, were enabled to find, what we had supposed impracticable, a road for the wagons up the high and precipitous steppe, and when once on the summit, instead of taking the northwest course which had brought us directly upon the deep chasms and other obstructions, they guided the command in a due west direction, finding a smooth road and heading the chasms entirely. Had Colonel Cooke known this route on leaving the main body, the fate of the expedition might have been different.

But even on gaining the Grand Prairie, and with the bright hopes of soon reaching the settlements, and a sufficiency of food before them, the sufferings of the men composing the main party were still intolerable. The Cayguas pursued them some distance, hovering upon their flanks and rear, and cutting off several small parties who had been driven by hunger to seek for grapes, plums, or game. The men were out of salt, their daily allowance was only one pound and a half of starved and sickly beef, which was probably two thirds bone, and their wants had caused great debility and disease among them. It is only necessary to mention, in order to shew the great sufferings they endured, that every dog in camp—and several of the Indian curs had followed us—was killed and greedily devoured. Snakes, lizards, tortoises, polecats—in short, almost every living and creeping thing upon the face of the prairie, was eaten with avidity, so ravenous was their hunger. Not a vestige, save the horns, hoofs, and larger bones of the beeves was left—the wolves and buzzards were even cheated of their just allowance, the hide and entrails, for all was devoured.

On arriving at the Laguna Colorado, a small sheet of reddish water south of the Angosturas, the advance of General McLeod was opposed by the Mexicans under Colonel Archlute. Out of more than two hundred men, it was now found that the Texans could muster but about ninety who were really fit for active service, and these would have been obliged to act on foot entirely, as their



horses had been either run off in the stampede on the Palo Duro, or kept so closely within the lines that they could not obtain grass enough to sustain their strength. Many of the men who had lost their horses, weak and dispirited from long marches and want of food, had secretly thrown away their arms to lighten themselves upon the road, and, in the mean time, that subordination, without which all efforts are useless, was in a measure lost. In this desperate condition, unable to hear a word concerning the fate of either Colonel Cooke or of two small parties they had sent out, and with the promise of good treatment and that their personal effects would be returned to them, a surrender was made. Many of the men, as well as officers, were ready and willing to bide the issue of an action in case their advance was opposed; but they were overruled by the majority, and thus was the fate of the expedition sealed. The men had no sooner laid down their arms than they were searched, robbed, tied, and most grossly insulted, and then, with hardly provisions enough to sustain nature, marched hurriedly to San Miguel. Of their arrival in that place I have already made mention. I will now continue the journey towards the city of Mexico.

The 17th of October, the day on which we started from San Miguel, was warm and showery. Our route lay towards Santa Fé, and over the same ground myself and companions had travelled the day on which we first met Armijo. About sundown, foot-sore and completely exhausted after a hurried march of thirty miles over a rough and hilly road, we reached the old ruin of Pecos—in former times a mission and a fortress, but now uninhabitable, and fast crumbling to decay. Salezar drove us into an enclosure amid the ruins, and there herded us for the night in quarters not fit even for brutes, and without giving us a morsel of food!

Immediately to the north of Pecos, and within a few miles, rose a lofty mountain whose summit was now covered with snow. On the other side of this mountain, and immediately at its base, lies the little mud-built city of Santa Fé, a place towards which we had been journeying for months, but which we were not destined to see.\* As I have before

\* General Zebulon M. Pike, in the narrative of his imprisonment in New Mexico, says that Santa Fé, from the mountain's sides, has



remarked, the day had been hot and sultry, with a shower in the afternoon sufficient to moisten the ground. The only baggage in possession of the prisoners, besides the slight and ragged clothing upon their backs, was a single blanket for each man. In this, each immediately rolled himself, and then stretched his weary limbs upon the cold, damp earth, vainly hoping that he might obtain rest and forgetfulness in sleep—but no such good fortune awaited us.

As if to increase our sufferings, a chill, biting wind sprang up, at dusk, fresh from the snow-clad mountain north of us, and in less than an hour it was so bitterly cold that to sleep was impossible. In vain did we crowd close to each other, in vain did we nestle in the little hollows formed in the uneven ground; the piercing wind penetrated our scanty covering and benumbed our every energy. I tried to rise, as did many of the unfortunate prisoners; but the cold wind had so stiffened our limbs, rendered in the first place heated and sore by the long mountain march, that we could scarcely move or turn over without enduring tortures the most excruciating. In this way, and without an hour's sleep, we passed our first night on the long road to Mexico.

Early in the morning we were ordered to continue the march, and without food. Salezar did, previous to starting, distribute some fifty small cakes among one hundred and eighty-seven half-starved men; and the manner of this distribution showed the brutal nature of the wretch. Calling the prisoners around him, each with the hope that he was to receive something to allay the sharp cravings of hunger, he would toss one of these cakes high in the air, and then, with a glee absolutely demoniacal, watch the scramble that ensued as it fell among the suffering throng. It was a game of the strong against the weak, this struggle for the few mouthfuls of food which Salezar threw among them. The better attributes of our nature, the kind sympathies and generous forbearance which lift man above the brutes, were for a time overwhelmed, in a majority of the prisoners, by long starvation and great bodily suffering; and now, as the savage

the appearance of an immense fleet of flat boats on the Mississippi, while Albert Pike, in his interesting sketches, likens its general features to those of an extensive brick-kiln, or rather a succession of brick-kilns. Either comparison is doubtless, correct, for such certainly is the appearance of all the towns in Northern Mexico through which I travelled.



who had charge of them, tossed the miserable pittance in the air, it was a study to watch their eager faces as it descended, to see with what wolf-like ferocity they would rush to secure the prize, and the terrible struggle which was sure to ensue ere some one, stronger than his fellows, could secure it. Salezar was accompanied by our old acquaintance, Don Jesus, in this distribution; and the satisfaction with which they watched the fierce conflicts, marked a new leaf in the dreadful chapter of human depravity.

This revolting scene was scarcely over before we were ordered to commence the day's march. Sore and stiff in every bone and joint, we started, many of the men being hardly able to hobble and halt along over the rough and rocky hills which now intervened between Pecos and the valley of the Rio Grande; but as the sun gradually dispersed the morning mists, and exercise warmed our limbs and reduced the stiffness in our joints, we were enabled to move with less pain. Our course was now nearly south. The road forks near Pecos, the right-hand branch leading directly towards Santa Fé, while the left, which we were now to take, is the regular thoroughfare towards Albuquerque and the other towns on the Rio Grande.

After a march of some thirty miles, during which the men suffered incredibly from hunger, thirst, and extreme lameness, night overtook us at the small rancho of a man named Pino, a brother of the brute of that name mentioned in a former chapter. Before reaching it, my feet were so badly swollen and blistered that I was obliged to draw off my boots, and finish the march with no other protection against the short and prickly grass than my stockings; yet many of my fellow-prisoners were unfortunately worse off than myself, their feet bleeding at every step.

We were driven, one by one, into a cow-pen or yard, and there encamped for the night, Salezar distributing a pint cup of meal to each man after having satisfied himself that none of us were missing. Even in his mode of counting us, he exhibited his characteristic brutality; for just as they drive sheep or cattle into pens in New Mexico, with the intention of enumerating them, so had he driven us!

A fence, which enclosed our pen, here partially protected us from the biting north wind, and in the early part of the night we were enabled to catch a little sleep. Towards morning, however, the weather changed to such a degree of



coldness that farther repose was impossible—it was so cold that the frost was plainly visible on our thin blankets. So stiff and benumbed were the men by this time, from cold, want of sleep, and the excessive fatigue they had undergone, that even an order to rise at daybreak and continue the march was received with joy by all—it would at least enable us to obtain warmth, and lessen the acute pains we felt in every bone.

From Pino we learned that General McLeod, Mr. Navarro, Dr. Whittaker, Captains Houghton and Hudson, with two or three other officers, had passed the previous night at his rancho, and were provided with comfortable quarters. They had been sent forward one day in advance of the main body, on horseback, and as they were fortunate enough to fall into the hands of an officer of humane feeling, were well treated. The name of this officer, if I remember aright, was Quintana, and our friends who were under his charge always spoke of him as a kind-hearted, gentlemanly man.

A walk of two or three hours, after leaving the rancho, relieved our limbs of the torturing pains felt during the latter part of the night, but our frostbitten feet now began swelling and paining us severely. The road of the two previous days had led over mountains and rugged hills; we now struck upon the valley of a small stream running into the Rio Grande a short distance to our right. After a long and toilsome march, our men suffering at every step, we encamped upon the borders of the little stream for the night. Here we experienced great relief from bathing our inflamed and swollen feet in its cold waters.

After issuing to each man a miserable pittance of barley-bread, so hard that it was impossible to eat it without much boiling, Salezar told us that his orders from Armijo were to tie us every night; but, as we were very tired, his *humanity* prevented him from carrying out the orders! He placed a strong guard around us, however, and coolly remarked that if a single man was missing in the morning the *whole party* would be instantly shot! The heartless wretch took especial good care that none should make an attempt of this kind, by working the men so hard during the day that they willingly sank upon the ground at night with hardly the power of moving.

A biting, chilly evening was followed by a heavy frost towards morning. Sleep was out of the question—we could



only curl up, and by nestling close to each other upon the cold ground, keep from freezing. At daylight we were ordered to be ready to march, and before sunrise were again upon the road, with nothing to eat. To let my readers know the horrible condition of our feet, I will here state, that for the next ten days after this, I was unable to pull off my stockings without bringing the skin with them. The large blisters would break during day, and the exudation, as it dried, adhere firmly to my stockings, so that I was obliged to keep them on although full of gravel, and torturing me at every step. Many of my companions suffered much more from frostbitten feet than myself, their toe-nails coming off, in consequence, before we got through our journey.

At a brisk pace we were hurried forward, reaching the little village of Santo Domingo, before it was yet noon, a distance of eighteen miles from our camping ground of the previous night. At this village our men first had cause to thank the women for their kindness. The latter came running out of the mud houses in every direction, bringing tortillas, baked pumpkins, and dry ears of corn, and fairly shedding tears at our forlorn and miserable appearance. The corn was our principal food, and was swallowed after simply roasting the ears a short time before the fire, although many of the more hungry among our men ate it raw.

A little farther on, we entered the village of San Felipe, the banks of the Rio Grande now seen to the right. Our course was nearly south, occasionally approaching the banks of the river, and then leaving it as the turns threw us off. The women of San Felipe were in every way as charitable as those of Santo Domingo. Many of them openly reproached Armijo as a brute unfit to live, and even the men took every opportunity to manifest their sorrow that we had fallen into his hands.

Towards night we reached Algodnes, a small village near the Rio Grande, and here we encamped. That the night would be unusually cold we were well aware, and Mr. Van Ness was requested by the men to ask Salezar if he could possibly procure shelter. Two small rooms, with a door leading from one to the other, and together hardly large enough for twenty men, were provided, and into these over one hundred and eighty of us were driven like so many sheep, and the heavy wooden door locked upon us. To



lie down, or even sit down was out of the question, and a scene of misery and desperation soon ensued which beggars description.

In the rear room there was no window, or other opening for a circulation of the air, except the door which opened into the front room, and this was blocked up by the mass who had crowded towards it. In the front room was a single open window, two feet in height, perhaps, by eighteen inches in width, and through this small aperture came all the fresh air that was to be inhaled by nearly two hundred persons! In this room, and within three yards of the window, I stood firmly wedged and jammed by human flesh, unable to move either forward or backward, to the right or to the left; yet even at this short distance from the window I soon felt sensations of suffocation—what then must have been the feelings of those in the farther room?

Soon, outcries arose from those in the rear. Half stifled, they shouted aloud to those in front to break open or tear down the door, and madly pressed forward as if to assist in accomplishing the object of their wishes. In the mean time, those nearest the window, who could speak Spanish, begged the guard to open the door and allow at least a part to leave the house; but the latter either could not hear their entreaties above the din, or heeded them not. Half-suffocated, and with sensations of sickness and giddiness, thoughts of the Black Hole of Calcutta, with its attendant train of horrors, now came over us; and I am confident that an order for instant execution would have been preferred by many to passing the night in that dismal, dark, and horrible place. An attempt to open the door, inwardly was now made, but so great was the press in that direction that it was found impossible to effect this desirable object; a battering-ram of human flesh was next brought to bear upon it, and with all the energy which desperation lends, did our men endeavour to burst lock or hinges—but it gave not way. In the midst of cries, imprecations, and half-smothered anathemas, we now heard a key turning in the clumsy and ponderous lock—Salezar had consented to pass fifty of us out, but no more.

Being near the door, as the guard without opened it, I was carried out in the current among the first. How grateful, how instantaneous was the relief! Cold as was the northern blast, it was pure—we could now breathe. The



guard escorted us to a cow yard, and there herded us for the night. I crawled under the lee of a low mud wall, still reeking with the perspiration which had issued from every pore while undergoing the tortures of heat and suffocation—the cold wind penetrated my blanket and chilled me through, yet I was content. So piercing was the blast, that even our guard left their posts, and sought the friendly shelter of the neighbouring houses, yet we had neither the power nor inclination to attempt an escape. Huddled together under the walls, shivering with the cold and without a minute's sleep, we passed the hours until morning came; yet even for this poor boon we felt thankful—felt rejoiced that we had escaped the horrid tortures of suffocation.

On the 21st of October, Salezar giving us no other rations before starting than an ear of dry hard corn to each man, we reached the large Indian village of San Dias. The pueblos, or town Indians of New Mexico, are by far the better part of the population—are frugal, industrious, and honest—cultivate the land, and are very kind hearted and hospitable to all strangers. Their religion is Roman Catholic, mixed up with many of their own superstitious rites and ceremonies, and the same may be said of nearly all the inhabitants of New Mexico. The Indians certainly retain, to the present day, many of their original rituals, feasts, and ceremonies, having ingrafted such of the Romish rites only as were calculated to strike the eye by their imposing pageantry. Stories of their strange ceremonies I myself heard, while at Sandia and other towns upon our march, but one that was told General Pike is more singular than all. If this tale be true, it would seem that once a year there is a great feast, prepared for three successive days, which time is spent in eating, drinking, and dancing. Near this scene of amusement is a dismal, gloomy cave, into which not a glimpse of light can penetrate, and where places of repose are provided for the revellers. To this cave, after dark, repair grown persons, of every age and sex, who pass the night in indulgences of the most gross and sensual description. Such is the account given of one of their ceremonies, cloaking, under a religious guise, an indiscriminate commerce, which bears strong resemblance to some of the mystic revels of the ancients.

At Sandia the population came out in a body to see us, and during a short halt, the women gave to each of our men



a watermelon, besides apples, cakes, and, in fact, everything they could spare. A grey-headed old man, who had been in St. Louis several times, and who spoke a little English, told us that the people were in our favour, and that Armijo was universally hated and despised. He would have said more, but our guard hurried us from the place. The dress of these people varies but little from that of the Mexicans; that of the men being a coarse cotton shirt, and loose and flowing drawers of the same material, over which they draw a pair of leather or cloth pantaloons, open from the knee downward, and flapping about whenever they are in motion. The women—and, for Indian women, many of them had strong pretensions to beauty—were attired simply in a chemise and blue woollen petticoat.

The inhabitants cultivate the soil, live principally upon corn and pumpkins, and appear to be a simple, mild, and inoffensive people—not having the spirit to rise upon their cowardly oppressors. Their complexion is a light, clear brown, or copper; their limbs are symmetrical, and denoting great activity and strength, while their eyes are dark and piercing, yet possessing a singular mildness and an expression of resignation.

— We should have remained a night at Sandia; but the policy of Salezar being to tire and worry us down to such a degree that there would be no possibility of our attempting an escape, we were barely allowed to pass some five minutes in the place. After a long and tedious march in the afternoon, many of our men nearly ready to drop from pain and exhaustion, we finally reached a little village called Alameda. Here we were penned in a large yard, without any protection from the cold. In the early part of the night I made out to catch a little sleep, but before midnight it was so cold that I rose, to find, if possible, a warmer location. I tried to crawl into a large oven standing in the yard, but found it already occupied by two or three of my companions. Surely misery not only makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows, but also with strange beds.

In the morning, and after we had each received our day's ration—a hard ear of corn—the tiresome march was continued. Passing through the fertile bottoms of the Rio Grande, the land on either side of the road covered with cornstalks from which the ears had but recently been plucked, about ten o'clock the still distant church of Albuquerque



appeared in view. The land in the vicinity of this city appears to be under a higher degree of cultivation than in any other part of New Mexico. The inhabitants do not depend upon rain in making their crops, but, on the contrary, the entire valley appears intersected by irrigating canals, from which the waters drawn from the broad, but shallow Rio Grande can at any time be let upon the earth. Among the stubble, on either side of the road, we noticed immense flocks of blue and white herons and wild geese, so exceedingly tame that we could approach within a few yards of them. The Mexicans seldom kill them, and hence their tameness.

We were yet some two or three miles distant from Albuquerque, journeying along at a rapid pace, when a single horseman was seen speeding across the fields and making directly towards us at a sweeping gallop. Soon he was up with the rear of the party, when checking his horse into a prancing canter, he politely raised his hat and with great cordiality addressed the prisoners as gentlemen while riding up the line towards the head. His horse was a beautiful black, of glossy skin, clean and well-made limbs, spirited eye, expanded nostrils, and proud and gallant action—the rider, a gay, dashing, and handsome Mexican, dressed in a pair of green velvet trousers, slashed at the sides, and with a profusion of bell buttons, while his close, neatly fitting jacket, although now somewhat faded and worn, showed him a fashionable blade among his countrymen, and altogether a different personage from the ragged rabble by whom we were surrounded. There was a flashing, dare-devil expression in his eye, too, and a jaunty set to his hat—and then he sat so fearlessly in his saddle, while his proud steed curvetted and caracoled along, as if impatient of the slow pace at which he was compelled to amble, that we could not but look with admiration at both horse and rider, so gallant was their bearing.

The horseman rode twice up and down the line of prisoners, nodding gracefully as he passed, and eyeing the crowd as if in search of a friend. By-and-by his eye fell upon one of our officers, Lieutenant Hornsby, who happened to be the best-dressed man in the party. His well-wadded and full-buttoned Texan dragoon-jacket was new, or nearly new, his cap and military trousers had seen but little service, while his blanket was of that fiery and showy red which



could not fail to attract in a country where gaudy and glaring colours are so much sought after and admired.

The Mexican cavalier at once checked his steed on seeing Hornsby, and immediately asked him if he was tired. This was a question he could not but answer in the affirmative. The horseman then asked H. to jump up behind him—his horse, he said, could easily carry double, and a short ride would rest the weary limbs of *el prisionero*. Instantly Hornsby was comfortably seated behind his new friend. The Mexican told him to place one arm around his waist, and then to hold fast: Hornsby did so. The next moment the horseman suddenly wheeled his steed in an opposite direction from that we were pursuing, plunged his heavy Mexican spurs in the animal's sides, and dashed off at a speed which was truly astonishing considering the heavy weight his steed was obliged to carry. He did not pursue the road over which we had just travelled, but leaving it a little to the right, struck off diagonally across fields and pastures. Here was an abduction, and we could not help congratulating our friend upon his good fortune. Whenever the party came to an irrigating ditch the horse would stop, brace himself, settle firmly upon his haunches, and then at a bound carry both his riders safely across. In the mean time we continued our journey towards Albuquerque, yet we could not but turn our eyes, ever and anon, to gaze at our rapidly-receding comrade. We watched him until nought could be seen but his red blanket rising and falling gently in the distance from the motion of the horse, and when we finally turned from gazing, it was with the firm belief that we were not soon to look upon him again.

About noon we entered Albuquerque, somewhat famed for the beauty of its women, besides being the largest place in the province of New Mexico, and the residence of Armijo a part of the year.\* His family were living here when we

\* General Pike, in his *Narrative*, speaks of having met with numbers of beautiful women at this place during a couple of days he spent there, in the winter of 1807, while on his journey from Santa Fé to Chihuahua, a prisoner. The following I quote from his journal: "We were received, at Albuquerque, by Father Ambrosio Guerra, in a very flattering manner, and led into his hall. From thence, after taking some refreshment, into an inner apartment, where he ordered his adopted children, of the female sex, to appear, when they came in by turns, Indians of various nations, Spanish, French, and finally, two young girls, whom, from their complexion, I



passed through, and treated Van Ness, who was allowed many liberties by Salezar, with much respect and consideration—loading him with excellent bread and other luxuries on his departure. As we were marched directly through the principal streets, the inhabitants were gathered on either side to gaze at the *estrangeros*, as we were called. The women, with all kindness of heart, gave our men corn, pumpkins, bread, and everything they could spare from their scanty store as we passed, and had Salezar allowed us to remain but an hour, all our immediate wants would have been supplied; but the hard-hearted wretch appeared to delight in acts of cruelty, and drove us through with scarcely a halt of ten minutes.

It was at Albuquerque that I saw a perfect specimen of female loveliness. The girl was poor, being dressed only in a chemise and coarse woollen petticoat; yet there was an air of grace, a charm about her, that neither birth nor fortune can bestow. She was standing upon a mud wall, the taper fingers of her right hand supporting a large pumpkin upon her head, while her left was gracefully resting upon her hip. Her dark, full, and lustrous eyes, over-arched with brows of pencilled regularity, and fringed with lashes of long and silken texture, beamed upon us full of tenderness and pity, while an unbidden tear of sorrow at our misfortunes was coursing down a cheek of the purest and richest olive. Her beautifully curved lips, half opened, as if in pity and astonishment at a scene so uncommon, disclosed teeth

conceived to be English: on perceiving I noticed them, he ordered the rest to retire, many of whom were beautiful, and directed those to sit down on the sofa beside me; thus situated, he told me they had been taken to the east by the Tetaus, passed from one nation to another until he purchased them, at that time infants, but they could recollect neither their names nor language; but concluding they were my countrywomen, he ordered them to embrace me as a mark of friendship, to which they appeared nothing loath. We then sat down to dinner, which consisted of various dishes, excellent wines, and to crown all, we were waited on by half a dozen of those beautiful girls, who, like Hebe at the feast of the gods, converted our wine into nectar, and with their ambrosial breath shed incense on our cups." Now, I neither saw as much nor enjoyed myself as well while a prisoner at Albuquerque, as did General Pike when he passed through there under circumstances somewhat similar; still, I saw enough to convince me that the race of pretty girls has not altogether degenerated, a fact of which my reader will be acquainted by reading the two following pages.



of pearly, dazzling whiteness. Innocence and the best feelings of our nature were playing in every lineament of that lovely face, and ever and anon, as some one of us more unfortunate than the rest would limp halting by, again her tears would gush from their fountains and illumine a countenance of purity. If

“Crystal tears from pity’s eye  
Are the stars in heaven high,”

Some of them fell that day from the poor village girl, drawn from their firmament to lighten the sorrows of those upon whom misfortune had laid her heavy hand. She could not be more than fifteen; yet her loose and flowing dress, but half concealing a bust of surpassing beauty and loveliness, plainly disclosed that she was just entering womanhood. Her figure was faultless, and even the chisel of Praxiteles himself never modelled angles of such pure and classic elegance.

As the long and straggling line of prisoners passed the spot upon which this lovely form was standing, sore and worn down by long marches, and want of food and sleep, her rare beauty drew the eyes of all towards her, and exclamations of wonder were upon every lip. She understood not our language, and in the heartless simplicity of her nature knew not that her singular loveliness, combined with the display of charms her unstudied yet graceful attitude and scanty dress had given, was the theme of almost universal admiration.

She beckoned to a youth among the prisoners, a German lad but little older than herself, and presented him the pumpkin with infinite delicacy and grace; and as she did it, the exclamation *pobrecito* was heard gently falling from her lips in tones of softest pity. The fairest flowers are oftenest found in obscurity, and I trust my readers will not doubt my sincerity when I assert that the prettiest girl I ever saw was selling woollen stockings at twenty-five cents a pair at Holmes’s Hole, Massachusetts—her twin-sister in beauty was standing in her bare feet upon a mud-wall at Albuquerque, New Mexico, with a pumpkin on her head!

I lingered to take a last look at the beautiful girl, and when I turned from the spot, I could not but regret that the lot of one so kind-hearted and so fair had been cast



in such a place. There are faces we see in our journey through life surpassingly beautiful, faces that leave a deep and lasting impression on the beholders, and hers was one of them. Among the crowds of beauty, her image will stand out in bold relief, and not one of those who saw her on the day we passed through Albuquerque will ever forget her.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

**Los Placeres.—Re-appearance of Lieutenant Hornsby.—Arrival at Valencia.—Farther Sufferings of the Prisoners.—Death of Ernest.—Cruel Murder of McAllister.—Casa Colorado.—Salezar and the Alcaldes—Story of Stump.—Arrival at Joya.—A Fandango.—Salezar Drunk.—Parrida.—Arrival at Socorro.—Character of the Inhabitants.—A Party of Apaches.—Obsequiousness of Salezar.—Bosque de los Apaches.—A Snow-storm at Night.**

After leaving Albuquerque, we continued our march through a succession of cultivated fields and pastures until we reached a small rancho called Los Placeres, and here we were encamped for the night. Nothing was given us to eat, and on complaining to Salezar that we were very hungry, he pointed to the spot where his mules and horses were feeding, and said that the *grazing was excellent!* Because many of the prisoners swallowed the corn given them by the women raw, the fellow called them wolves and hogs.

At this place we were visited by a family of Mexican women of no inconsiderable wealth, who lived at a rancho some little distance from our road. It consisted of a mother and her two daughters, and I will venture the assertion that either of the latter weighed more than two hundred pounds, and will also declare positively that neither of them was very prepossessing in appearance. They had brought two large watermelons as a present, and while one of the girls bestowed a melon upon one of my companions, her sister made choice of me as the recipient of the other. I gave the girl the customary *mil gracias*, or thousand thanks, as I received the melon; had the pretty one of Albuquerque given me that pumpkin I should have been far better satisfied.

Not a little astonished were we, when, towards evening, our absent comrade, Hornsby, with a chopfallen countenance and a half-worn jacket, a world too small for him, was seen approaching, his Mexican friend, the dashing horseman, setting him down near our quarters and then galloping off in



the direction of his home. A singular story did the lieutenant tell of his adventure, the substance of which was as follows :

On first mounting behind the Mexican, he supposed that the fellow simply intended carrying him a mile or two on the route—perhaps to Albuquerque, which was then in sight ; but to his astonishment the man wheeled his horse suddenly round, and struck off across the fields at a tremendous pace. Hornsby had employment enough in hanging on to his new friend, to avoid being thrown off as the gallant horse leaped the irrigating canals, so that, to use his own words, he had no time to speculate upon the singularity of his adventure, or upon the intentions of the wild horseman who was giving him such a race. A hard ride of three or four miles brought them to a house of neater construction and finish than were possessed by the generality of Mexican dwellings. It was a solitary house, and appeared to be about half a mile from the road he had walked over but a short time previous. Once at the door, the Mexican threw himself lightly from his animal, and, after assisting Hornsby to dismount, politely asked him to enter his dwelling. There was an air of neatness and comfort within, and the furniture betokened a style of living which formed a singular contrast with the destitution apparent in even the better class of houses upon the road.

His strange host led the way into a room in which the furniture and appointments were absolutely luxurious. Over the fireplace was a large mirror ; two or three scriptural paintings, one of them a well-executed portrait of the Virgin, adorned the walls ; while upon a sideboard was neatly arranged a set of decanters and tumblers, all of cut glass, and of admirable workmanship. Here the Mexican left him for a moment, but soon returned with a massive silver pitcher filled with cool water.

Unfortunately, Hornsby could speak but little Spanish, and was, consequently, unable to carry on a regular conversation with his host ; but when the latter pointed to a tumbler, and then to a decanter of brandy, our lieutenant understood him perfectly, and manifested his knowledge of signs by helping himself to a bountiful allowance. At this juncture the wife of the gay cavalier, a mild-eyed, pretty woman, entered the apartment, and, exchanging a few words



with her husband, led the way to a table in another room, which was fairly groaning under the weight of a hot and sumptuous breakfast. Hornsby, now more astonished than ever, and wondering how this adventure was to terminate, took a seat at the table in silence, and ate a heartier meal than he had done for months. Both the husband and wife were assiduous in their attentions, and pressed dish after dish upon him with a most zealous courtesy.

Breakfast over, the wife brought in a package of cigarritos, or shuck cigars, and after the husband had lit one of them by means of the flint and steel which every Mexican carries in his pocket, and had politely asked his guest to join him in a smoke, he opened the business which had induced him to *invite* Hornsby to his dwelling. By words, and more particularly by signs, he informed his guest that he had taken a great fancy to his military jacket, and that he must exchange with him. Hornsby responded, with an equal amount of his own vernacular and a corresponding quantity of signs, to the effect that the jacket of his host was much too small for him, and that he was not disposed to trade. The gentle and pretty wife, who had been all the while watching either party, now interfered, her actions plainly denoting that she was anxiously entreating her husband not to entertain their guest thus rudely and uncharitably. Paying no heed to her entreaties, the husband again intimated to Hornsby that he must doff his jacket—he had no money to offer him in exchange, but then he had given him a ride, a drink, and a breakfast, and, as a return for these civilities, only wished to exchange jackets. He stripped off his own, notwithstanding his wife's opposition, and now commenced assisting his guest in taking off the much-desired garment. It was a forced transfer, contrary to the laws of Mexico; but our comrade was driven into the transaction.

The Mexican next brought a coarse, thick, and heavy blanket, which he wished to exchange for the scarlet affair belonging to Hornsby. As there was no such thing as avoiding a trade when his host had determined that it must be, our comrade, with a sorry grace, submitted to his demands: yet this time he really got the best of the bargain, for the blanket he received was much warmer and of infinitely more service than the one forced from him. The Mexican now pointed to his horse, which was still tied in front of the



dwelling, and uttered the well-known *buenos*.\* It was now Hornsby's turn to take a liberty. Heretofore his host had made himself exceedingly free on a very limited acquaintance, as Hornsby dryly expressed it: the latter now be-thought him that he would pay off a small portion of the debt in kind. He therefore walked deliberately to the side-board, poured himself out a stiff glass of brandy, and bowing very respectfully to his host, tossed it off. He then expressed his readiness to depart, and walking out of the house, was soon seated behind his singular host. The wife now made her appearance with the new blanket, in which she had tied a large quantity of dried beef. Watching an opportunity while the eyes of her husband were turned away, she stealthily slipped a quarter of a dollar into the hands of Hornsby—probably her little all. A tear stood in her eyes as she murmured "*Adios Senor*," for the kind-hearted creature felt deeply mortified at the inhospitable manner in which her husband had treated a guest. Another moment, and Hornsby was on his way to rejoin his comrades, the Mexican apparently anxious to escape the reproachful looks of his gentle wife; and ere it was yet dark he had discharged his burden within a few yards of our camping-ground. Such was the story told of the gay cavalier, who, by his dashing and fearless riding, had excited our warmest admiration in the morning. Was ever such an ingenious trick to effect an exchange of clothing? Salezar was probably privy to the whole transaction, else he would never have permitted his brother Mexican to carry off one of the prisoners in such a manner. The self-esteem of the highwayman would not allow him openly to rob our comrade—he thought the cloak of hospitality which he threw over his act more than covered its rascality. But I must return to my narrative of more important events.

Late on the evening of the 24th of October, and after a march of uncommon length, we reached the little town of Valencia. Here a pint of flour was distributed to each of the prisoners; but many of the men were so tired, faint, and sore, from the long and continued marches, and from cold and want of sleep at night, that they had neither the will nor strength to cook even this scanty ration. On the contrary, they sank immediately upon the cold ground, and

\* Come, let us be moving—a word we heard forty times a day, and the import of which we soon understood.



vainly endeavoured to smother their pains and sorrows in sleep. Fitzgerald and myself had better quarters, or rather a better bed, that night, than our fellows. We were about lying down, immediately in front of a small house, when an old woman threw us out a couple of sheepskins with the wool still on. With these between us and the cold ground we really passed a comfortable night.

Not so one of our unfortunate companions. On rising in the morning, it was found that a man named Ernest had died during the night—died from hunger, cold, and fatigue, and without even the knowledge of the man sleeping by his side! The long march of the previous day had so weakened the poor Texan that on reaching camp he had sunk to the ground exhausted. He soon fell asleep, and with him it proved to be the sleep which knows no waking! Not a murmur, not a groan did he utter; but when his companion shook him in the morning, with the intention of arousing him to the fatigues and sufferings of another day, the lamp of his existence had burned out, or rather had been rudely smothered—he was stiff and cold! Salezar immediately ordered one of his men to cut off and preserve the dead man's ears, as a token that he had not escaped, and by the orders of the same brute the body was thrown into a neighbouring ditch. An American with two or three wagons, who was on his way from the United States to either Monterey or Saltillo with machinery, was within two hundred yards of us all the while, and saw the whole transaction. Salezar would not allow us to hold any conversation or communicate with this man; but we afterwards learned that he had been an overseer on some plantation near New-Orleans, and that the machinery he had with him was a sugarmill on a large scale, which he had been employed to set in operation in Mexico. I heard the man's name, but have forgotten it.

Scarcely had the events occurred, of which I have given a brief recital, ere we were ordered to form in line and be counted before resuming the march: even before we could finish the cooking of our scanty supply of meal into thin mush we were compelled to move. Just as we were starting, a man named John McAllister, a native of Tennessee and of excellent family, complained that one of his ankles was badly sprained, and that it was utterly impossible for him to walk. The unfortunate man was naturally lame in the other



ankle, and could never walk but with difficulty and with a limp. On starting, he was now allowed to enter a rude Mexican cart, which had been procured by the Alcalde of Valencia for the purpose of transporting some of the sick and lame prisoners ; but before it had proceeded a mile upon the road it either broke down or was found to be too heavily loaded. At all events, McAllister was ordered by Salezar to hobble along as best he might, and to overtake the main body of prisoners, now some quarter of a mile in advance. The wretch had frequently told those who, from inability or weakness, had fallen behind, that he would shoot them rather than have the march delayed ; not that there was any necessity for the hot haste with which we were driven, but to gratify his brutal disposition did he make these threats. Although he had struck, and in several cases severely beaten, many of the sick and lame prisoners, we could not believe that he was so utterly destitute of feeling, so brutal, as to murder a man in cold blood, whose only fault was that he was crippled and unable to walk. He could easily have procured transportation for all if he had wished, and that he would do so rather than shoot down any of the more unfortunate we felt confident : how much we mistook the man !

On being driven from the cart, Mc Allister declared his inability to proceed on foot. Salezar drew his sword and peremptorily ordered him to hurry on, and this when he had half a dozen led mules, upon either of which he could have placed the unfortunate man. Again Mc Allister, pointing to his swollen and inflamed ankle, declared himself unable to walk. Some half a dozen of his comrades were standing around him, with feelings painfully wrought up, waiting the *denouement* of an affair which, from the angry appearance of Salezar, they now feared would be tragical. Once more the bloodthirsty savage pointing to the main body of prisoners, ordered the cripple to hurry forward and overtake them—he *could not* ! “Forward !” said Salezar, now wrought up to a pitch of frenzy. “Forward, or I’ll shoot you on the spot !” “Then shoot !” replied Mc Allister, throwing off his blanket and exposing his manly breast, “and the quicker the better !” Salezar took him at his word, and a single ball sent as brave a man as ever trod the earth to eternity ! His ears were then cut off, his shirt and pantaloons stripped from him, and his body thrown by the roadside as food for wolves !

A thrill of horror ran through the crowd of prisoners as



the news spread that one of our men had been deliberately shot down in cold blood, and deep but whispered threats of vengeance for this most unnatural murder were heard upon every lip. In our present condition we could do nothing. It would have been an easy matter for us to rise and overpower the guard; but their arms were worthless, and it would have been impossible, unacquainted as we were with the country, to cut our way through to Texas without provisions. And then, as I once before remarked, it was part of Salezar's policy to drive us along and tire us down by marches of almost incredible length, and so to weaken us by scanty food, that escape would be next to impossible. Weak as we were, however, had our guard been well armed with rifles or muskets, and with plenty of ammunition, we never should have been marched to the Paso del Norte; but those who had charge of us were strong in their very weakness. Thus wretchedly we were compelled to journey forward in dreary hope of falling into more humane hands on reaching the State of Chihuahua.

Late in the afternoon of the day on which Mc Allister was murdered, we reached the Casa Colorada, or Red House, a large hacienda and trading establishment belonging, I believe, to one of the Chavez family. Passing the little collection of houses, we entered a grove of cotton-woods near the Rio Grande, and there encamped for the night. From the time when we first struck the valley of this stream, after leaving the mountains in the neighbourhood of Santa Fé, to that when we reached the Paso del Norte, but little timber was seen, and that was composed exclusively of cotton-woods. The inhabitants are very saving of this timber, although it is exceedingly soft and brittle; yet, as they can obtain no other for the construction of their rude carts, ploughs, and other implements, its uses to them are invaluable. Sometimes we would journey for days, hardly seeing a tree to each mile we travelled. The few fences, like the houses, are constructed of *adobes*, or sun-dried bricks, square instead of oblong, and perhaps four times the size of ordinary bricks. Of this material nearly all the dwellings of the lower classes in Mexico are constructed. The valley of the Rio Grande, above El Paso, is of unequal width, varying from a mile and a half to four or five miles, and in some places perhaps more. On either side of the valley rises a chain of hills—some of them may deserve the name of mountains—which for th-



most part appeared sterile and destitute of vegetation. The valley itself is generally fertile, well adapted to the growth of corn, wheat, beans, and pumpkins; not a potato, either sweet or Irish, did we see, although the latter, in particular, would undoubtedly attain great perfection. Under Anglo-Saxon cultivation, this region might support five times the population it now contains; still, the want of timber and the immense distance to a market, will always present obstacles to emigration in that direction.

The custom had been, on nearing the camp each afternoon, for the prisoners to pick up every little chip and twig by the roadside, wherewith to cook their scanty rations of dry corn or meal; for the first time, since we had entered the valley we now found a sufficiency of wood, but a majority of us had nothing to cook. On leaving San Miguel, Armijo had given Salezar eighteen head of cattle, some of the oxen taken from the Texans, and had ordered him to kill them for our use. I will even give the governor credit by believing that he placed a quantity of the goods taken from the Texans in the hands of Salezar, for the purpose of trading them for breadstuff on the road, to be appropriated to our use; yet, up to this time, the scoundrel had neither killed one of the oxen nor disposed of a single article of merchandise for anything but money, all of which he placed in his own pockets. Our sufferings were plainly a gratification to him, and to sustain life he compelled us to depend alone upon the charities of the women, or upon the small supply of corn and meal he wrung, by threats and violence, from the different alcaldes of the villages through which we passed. In the mean time, to still the inordinate cravings of hunger and to procure an occasional ride upon the animals of our guard, the prisoners had disposed of every little article of clothing they could possibly spare, frequently exchanging a pair of their own woollen pantaloons for the ragged breeches of the Mexicans, to purchase a ride of a few miles. The buttons, too, from their clothing, they had bartered either for meal or rides; and as by this time they were nearly all expended, the sufferings of the majority may be said to have fairly commenced.\*

\* Buttons commanded a high price, for even an ordinary iron or horn article, such as might be easily purchased for six cents per dozen at any shop in the United States, in New Mexico would procure for one of our prisoners a ride of several miles, or bread enough to last him a day. Needles, too, were in great demand; one of our



I cannot leave our encampment among the cotton woods near the Casa Colorada, without relating an amusing story told that evening by "Old Paint" Caldwell. The time appeared ill-assorted with merriment and laughter, yet laugh we did, and heartily too, at the recital of the old captain's anecdote.

Among the passengers in the cart with poor McAllister were the narrator and a man who went by the soubriquet of "Stump;" there may have been others, but if there were I have now forgotten their names. In the morning, before starting, Stump had declared that he could not walk a mile—to save his life, even—and so positive was he upon this point, that a place was provided for him in the cart. When this vehicle met with the accident, of course Stump was thrown upon his feet with the rest. While the few words were passing between McAllister and Salezar, and previous to the inhuman murder of the former, Stump was hobbling about, apparently unable to walk at all; his feet were sore, his knees were stiff, and not a bone was there in his body that did not pain him at every movement—he was curled up, the picture of despair; but no sooner did he see his comrade fall, and feel the certainty that he, too, would meet with a similar fate unless he put his powers of locomotion in immediate action, than, to use the old captain's own words, Stump straightened up and started at a pace that would have staggered Captain Barclay, Ellworth, or the greatest pedestrian mentioned in the annals of "tall walking." Stump went by, first one, then another, of his companions, and never abated his stride until he was in the lead of the whole party of prisoners; a position he pertinaciously kept through the remainder of the day, and, in fact, during the march. In the morning he *could not* walk a mile: he afterward *did* walk something like eighteen hundred, and without flagging. This story of the old captain's through, we cast our weary limbs upon the earth, and as the groves of trees in which we were encamped materially deadened the force of the wind, we were enabled

men, a tailor, who had been fortunate enough to save two or three papers, was enabled to procure an ample supply of food, and also to have a mule when his necessities required. This information may be useful to some itinerant pedler of small "notions," although I cannot conscientiously advise him to visit New Mexico for a market.



to pass a more comfortable night than any since we left San Miguel.

On the following day we passed the long train of wagons belonging to Mr. Magoffin, of Chihuahua—the same that had arrived at San Miguel from St. Louis while we were there. The drivers were all Americans—brown, healthy-looking men; and although strict orders were given by Salezar that no communication should be held, we still exchanged a few words with them as we passed. It brought back old times and old recollections to see these men, fresh from my own country, and anxiously did I wish that I might obtain an hour's conversation with them, an opportunity to learn the news from the United States, if nothing more; I could only wish, as Salezar took especial care that my desire should not be gratified.

A little before sundown we reached the village of Joya, and here our men were allowed a shelter for the night, in two or three old and abandoned rooms. A fandango was got up during the evening in the town, at which Howard, Van Ness, and two or three of our officers were allowed to be present. Here they met several of the Americans we had passed during the day, their encampment being in the skirts of the village close by. Salezar became much intoxicated during the evening, and with the fumes of whiskey in his head grew insolent and overbearing towards the drivers. Fortunately, they came well provided with bowie-knives, thinking they might possibly be insulted; and no sooner had Salezar commenced his insolence than he was driven—I believe *kicked*—from the room, the cowardly wretch not daring even to open his mouth after their weapons were drawn.

By making an early start on the following morning we were enabled to reach Parida, a small town immediately on the banks of the Rio Grande, by the middle of the afternoon. Here, in the plaza, we stopped for the night; and here, after an allowance of a pint of meal had been measured out to each man by the alcalde and Salezar, we were permitted to make and eat our poor mush in peace and quietness. At Parida I was also fortunate in purchasing a pair of heavy and substantial shoes, after walking several days in a pair of soleless moccasins, which let in the gravel at every step upon the numerous blisters that covered my feet. I had not a little difficulty in making change with the



*zapatero* of whom I purchased, for the piece of gold I tendered him in payment I was anxious to keep from the eyes of Salezar. The brute knew that I had a small sum of money about me—some few dollars. Had he suspected the large amount in gold and jewellery I had concealed in those ragged and dirty vestments of mine, he would soon have found a pretext for sending me to keep company with the murdered McAllister.

After a hasty breakfast of mush, on the following morning, we were once more upon our journey. A short walk brought us to the banks of the Rio Grande, here some three or four hundred yards in width. The water was cold and waist deep to our men, yet we were obliged to ford it, and when once safely upon the opposite side, we had entered Mexican territory for the first time. I say for the first time, because Texas claims to the Rio Grande, and, sooner or later, this will be her boundary line.

An hour's brisk march along the river banks brought us to Socorro, the last settlement before reaching El Paso. What the exact distance between the two places is I have now forgotten, but it cannot be far from two hundred miles. As Salezar had to make a demand on the alcalde for corn and meal enough to sustain us across the long and dreary waste yet to travel, we were permitted to remain at Socorro until the following day. That the inhabitants of this frontier town were a pack of thieving, cheating, swindling scoundrels, we ascertained beyond doubt before we had been in the place two hours. I remember too, perfectly well, that a small party of us paid for a supper twice at this place, and that, because we would not pay for it a third time, the master of the house became very much incensed.

When we were at Socorro, a party of Indians, belonging to the large and powerful tribe of Apaches, were encamped in the vicinity. They live, for the most part, in a rough and mountainous country, yet, like the Camanches and Pawnees, are ever on horseback, and are daring and skilful riders. With the inhabitants of the States of Chihuahua and Durango they are at continual and open war, murdering and robbing the inhabitants whenever opportunity offers; yet with the people of New Mexico they are at peace, and the plunder they obtain in their incursions into the former states is sold to the citizens of the latter, who are ever found ready purchasers! A pretty state of things, truly, but so it



is. I was told that many of the horses of New Mexico really belonged to persons in the former states, and that the purchasers bought them with powder and lead, knowing that it was to be used against their neighbours and brethren! Armijo and some of his principal officers probably know more about this singular and most unrighteous compact, and of the profits arising from the trade with these Indian banditti, than any other persons in Mexico.

While at Socorro, one of the prisoners, who was a Catholic, obtained permission to visit the priest of the place. The real object of the man was, to obtain something in the way of solid assistance—something to eat upon the road—temporal rather than spiritual aid and consolation. The priest gave him absolution and a small bundle of shuck cigars. I do not mention this circumstance to stigmatize the holy fathers generally of Mexico, for we found a majority of them liberal and enlightened men, and disposed to assist us as far as was in their power.

On the morning of the 29th of October we left Socorro without regret; for although its name signifies succour or assistance, we found none within its inhospitable gates. We had travelled but a short distance, before the head or principal chief of the Apaches, with a small retinue of his warriors, were seen rapidly dashing over a hill, having ridden out especially to see *los Americanos*, as they called us, who had surrendered their arms to the New Mexicans. At one time the inhabitants of Chihuahua had employed a number of American adventurers in different expeditions against the Apaches, and in every engagement the former were able to bring about, the Indians were defeated with no little loss. The rifles of the Americans told with signal advantage against the bows and arrows, lances, and ineffective Spanish carbines of their adversaries, fought they ever so bravely; and now that one of the principal chiefs of the latter had an opportunity of seeing some of the countrymen of their much dreaded enemies he did not miss the opportunity.

A more dignified savage in appearance than this chief I have never seen. He was about the middle height, strong and well built, some sixty-five or seventy years of age, and with hair as white as snow. He was dressed in an old-fashioned blue military coat and blue pantaloons; a huge pair of gold epaulettes graced his shoulders, while his head



was covered with a Continental tri-cocked hat, such as was worn by our grandfathers in the days of the Revolution. His countenance was stern, strongly marked, and very expressive, and he was mounted upon a large and powerful gray charger, of fine action, and apparently of good blood.

He rode up to the head of the line, in company with Salezar. As we passed in review before him, a ragged, beggared, and emaciated throng, the old man examined us with the eye of an eagle—his thoughts could not be divined. Salezar appeared polite even to obsequiousness in presence of this man, and it was intimated at the time that he stood in much fear lest the old chief might take it into his head to rescue us from his hands, a matter he might easily have accomplished. What would have been our fate had he done so—whether he would have sacrificed us on the spot in revenge for the losses he had sustained at the hands of our countrymen, or taken us to the mountains, is a question I am unable to answer. One thing I do know—had he called for volunteers to act against any part of Mexico, and promised to arm all that came, he might have got them to the full extent of our number. After the last stragglers had passed him, the old chief turned his horse and rode over the hills in the direction whence he came. His followers were dressed much in the general Indian costume—buckskin shirts, leggins, and the usual quantity of feathers and finery. I also noticed, while in Socorro, that the Apaches have the besetting sin of all the aborigines of America; several of them were seen reeling about upon their horses, so drunk that they could with difficulty keep their seats.

After a walk of unusual length, across a bend of the Rio Grande—I say unusual, for it was nearly forty miles—we reached, just at dark, a large grove of cotton-woods, close upon the river bank. This grove was called the Bosque de los Apaches, or, Wood of the Apaches, and afforded us one of the best camping-grounds on the journey. We recrossed the river at an early hour on the following morning, and another long and tiresome march brought us to Fray Cristobal, the last camping-ground before entering the noted *Dead Man's Journey*! This is a well-known stretch of ninety miles, across a large bend of the river.\* To avoid

\* The Mexicans call this noted stretch *La Jornada del Muerto*, or, The Journey of the Dead Man—our men gave it the name of the Dead Man's Journey, and by that title I designate it.



many weary miles, a road has been worn directly through the centre of this bend, by the travel of years. It is a level, sterile, and desolate plain—a desert, with no vegetation save here and there a few stunted thorns, different species of the cactus, of dwarf-like proportions, and clumps of one of the smaller kinds of palm, growing to the height of some six or seven feet, with long, coarse leaves, branching up from the roots, and forming a very mat, from the closeness with which they grow together. These clumps were called *bear grass*, by our men, and at a little distance they resembled long and slender bundles of coarse straw. Near the centre of the desert is the *Dead Man's Lake*,\* which, during the spring and early summer, is filled with water; but when we crossed, its bed was perfectly dry.

Immediately on our arrival at the camping-ground of Fray Cristobal, a bleak, sandy point of land, formed by a slight curve in the Rio Grande, Salezar ordered that the poorest and most travel-worn of the eighteen oxen, given him at San Miguel by Armijo, should be killed for the prisoners, taking most especial care, however, that all the better portions—everything really fit to eat—should be reserved for himself and his friends. Poor and tough as was this meat, our men swallowed it with an avidity absolutely wolfish. The scanty meal over, they rolled themselves in their blankets, and once more sought such rest as the cold ground might afford them.

During the earlier part of the evening the wind was biting and chilly, but at midnight the weather moderated, and then commenced a violent fall of snow. I drew my blanket entirely over my head, thought of home and its comforts, and while thinking of them, fell asleep; for the snow, as it lodged upon my scanty covering, imparted a warmth, to which I had long been a stranger.

When morning light came I raised my head and surveyed the scene. Far as the eye could reach, the face of nature was clothed in white, the snow having fallen to the depth of five or six inches. My companions were lying thick around me, their heads and all concealed, and more resembled logs imbedded in snow than anything else to which I can compare them. No one would have supposed that animated beings were under those little mounds, were it not that from many

\* Called by the Mexicans *Laguna del Muerto*, or *Lake of the Dead Man*.



of them a hollow, hacking, and half-suppressed cough proceeded. The two or three nights we had passed within doors, huddled some thirty or forty in rooms scarcely capacious enough for three or four, had given nearly all extremely bad colds—colds they were unable either to guard against or cure.



## CHAPTER XIX.

Departure from Fray Cristobal.—Encounter with a Regiment of Dragoons.—Southern Women in a Northern Climate.—Sufferings upon the “Dead Man’s Journey.”—The “Lake of Death.”—Murder of Golpin.—Salezar, and his Comfortable Quarters.—Another Cruel Murder.—Once more on the Rio Grande.—The “Journey of Death” passed.—Appearance of the Prisoners.—Food and Sleep.—Easier learning to Swear than Pray in a Language.—Threat of Salezar to search the Prisoners.—A Batch of valuable Bread.—A Sunset Scene.—Death of Gates.—Dreary Passage of the Rio Grande.—Salezar’s Last Command.—Arrival at El Paso.—Old Friends Seen.—General Elias.—Our Hospitable Treatment by Him.—Captain Ochoa.—Sumptuous Living.

We remained at Fray Cristobal until near night, the snow, in the mean time, thawing away entirely under the influence of the sun. Salezar said aloud, on starting, that we were to be driven through the entire ninety miles without sleep or a morsel of food, and as there was no water on the route, he advised such of us as had gourds or canteens to fill them before setting out; an exhibition of humanity truly considerate and unlooked for in him.

At a steady pace we journeyed onward till dark, the weather mild and pleasant for walking; but now a raw night wind sprang up, fresh and piercing, from the snow-clad mountains, and chilling our weak frames so thoroughly, that the most violent exercise could not keep us warm. A water-gourd, holding some two quarts, which I had filled on starting, after taking a hearty draught at the river, slipped from my benumbed fingers, and was dashed to pieces on the frozen ground. The animals of our guard went begging for riders, for even their hardy owners were obliged to dismount and run on foot to prevent their limbs from freezing.

About nine o’clock at night we met a regiment of dragoons, under Colonel Munoz, on the way from Durango to Santa Fé: troops that had been dispatched by the Central Government to take part in any hostilities that might occur



with the Texans. Being from a more southern and temperate climate, they suffered excessively from the cold, so much so, that many of them were leading their horses, and setting fire to every little tuft of palm or dry grass on either side of the road. Around these blazing tufts, and scattered along the road for miles, were to be seen, knots of half-frozen dragoons, mingled with a large number of women, who always follow the Mexican soldiery on a march. How the latter, who were but half-clad even in the warmest climate, could withstand the bitter cold of that dreary night, is to me incomprehensible.

Wild and picturesque was the scene presented by the train of roadside fires, each with a little bevy huddling and shivering around the red glaring and fitful lights, the lengthened and flitting shadows coming and going, and losing themselves in the sombre obscuration of night. There would be seen the officer, cloaked and blanketed, standing side by side with one of his men, the head of the latter, covered with a clumsy, bear-skin, dragoon cap, while he would share his sky-blue military cloak with some woman, who had followed him, mayhap, from the *tierra caliente*, or sunny south, and was now, for the first time, visiting the region of snow. As tuft after tuft would fall away at the touch of fire, the wild group would hurry on to others, soon kindle them, and as they in turn would suddenly flash up, blaze for a few moments, and then as suddenly expire, away they would hie to the next. Eldrich and spectre faces came and vanished on that barren moor, that did strongly remind me of the witch scenes in Macbeth. While standing around these fires, some of the dragoons informed our men that they met Colonel Cooke's party near Chihuahua, and that they were well treated on the road. There was consolation in this, for we had heard many rumours of the bad treatment we might expect on the other side of the Paso del Norte.

The sufferings, the horrors of that dreadful night upon the Dead Man's Journey cannot be soon effaced from the memory of those who endured them. Although my sore and blistered feet, and still lame ankle, pained me excessively, it was nothing to the biting cold and the helpless drowsiness which cold begets. No halt was called—had any of us fallen asleep by the road side after midnight, it would have been the sleep of death. Towards daylight many of the prisoners were fairly walking in their sleep and staggering about, from one



side of the road to the other, like so many drunken men. Completely chilled through, even the senses were benumbed, and they would sink by the road-side and beg to be left behind to sleep and to perish. A stupor, a perfect indifference for life, came over many of us, and the stronger found employment in rousing and assisting the weaker. Anxiously did we wait the coming of the sun, for that would at least bring warmth and animation to our paralyzed limbs and faculties.

Daylight came at last, and with it came a halt of an hour, to bring up the stragglers and count the prisoners. By the time the last of us were up, the trumpet again sounded the advance, and once more we were upon the road. Towards noon we passed the Dead Man's Lake, or Lake of Death, its bed perfectly dry. The coolness of the weather, however, and the fact that we had nothing to eat, prevented that thirst which in a warmer temperature would have caused sufferings of a nature that cannot be described.

As the sun was about setting, those of us who were in front were startled by the report of two guns, following each other in quick succession. We turned to ascertain the cause, and soon found that a poor, unfortunate man, named Golpin, a merchant, who had joined the expedition with a small amount of goods, had been shot by the rear-guard for no other reason than that *he was too sick and weak to keep up!* He had made a bargain with one of the guard to ride his mule a short distance, for which he was to give him his only shirt! While in the act of taking it off, Salezar ordered a soldier to shoot him. The first ball only wounded the wretched man, but the second killed him instantly, and he fell, with his shirt still about his face. Golpin was a citizen of the United States, and reached Texas a short time before the departure of the expedition. He appeared to be a harmless, inoffensive man, of delicate constitution, and during the greater part of the time we were upon the road, before the capture of the expedition, was obliged to ride in one of the wagons. The brutal Salezar, rather than be troubled with him any longer, took this method of ridding himself of an encumbrance! It may be difficult, for many of my readers, to believe that such an act of wanton barbarity could be perpetrated by a people pretending to be civilized—to be Christians! I should certainly be loath to hazard my



reputation by telling the story were there not nearly two hundred witnesses of the scene.

In half an hour after the murder of Golpin, and before it was yet dark, we were ordered to halt for a short time, the horses and mules of our guard absolutely requiring a little rest after being constantly in motion for more than twenty-four hours. Had Salezar consulted only the feelings of the prisoners, no halt would have been called.

During the short rest now allowed us we were permitted to lie down, but sleep was impossible. Had we been granted rest during the day, when the warm sun was shining over us, we might have slept, and soundly, too: now, it was so cold we could but curl up close, one to another, in a state of discomfort that forbade sleep. At ten o'clock at night, or near that hour, we were again roused and ordered to resume the march. The short rest which had been granted was far from restoring us to strength, far from removing the soreness and stiffness from our bones: on the contrary, we were now more unfitted for the gloomy march than ever. We had travelled but a short half mile before we passed the two wagons in which the baggage and camp equipage of the Mexicans were carried. In one of these, stowed snugly under the cotton cover, were Salezar and his lieutenant, the redoubtable Don Jesus. They, at least, had made themselves comfortable, and were snoring away, utterly regardless of the sufferings around them.

About midnight we reached a part of the desert where the high branches of palm had not been burned, the dragoons probably passing this section in the daytime. These dry tufts were at once set on fire by the Mexicans to warm their benumbed and half-frozen hands and feet. We, too, crowded around them, and as one would burn down to a level with the ground we rushed hurriedly to the next. Our line now extended nearly a mile along the road, and the blazing clumps, which flashed up like powder on being ignited, gave a wild and romantic appearance to the scene, more especially when the dark and swarthy faces of the Mexicans and the wild and haggard features of our men were seen congregated round the same fire.

The early hours of the morning were colder than any which had preceded them, as the biting winds from the mountains appeared to have a more open sweep across the



desert plain. The sufferings, too, of the previous night were increased in proportion as we had less strength to endure them; and here it should be remembered that we had had no food given us from our commencement of the Dead Man's Journey, now thirty-six hours, and that we had been in active exercise nearly the whole time. How this dreary road across the waste ever obtained its congenial name is more than I could learn. It certainly deserves it, more especially since the murders committed along its line by Salezar.

That faint streak of lightest gray which heralds daylight had but just appeared in the Eastern horizon, when a man named Griffith, who had been wounded by the Indians before we were taken prisoners, and had not entirely recovered, gave out, and declared his inability to proceed any farther. He had ridden a mule until his faculties were nearly paralyzed by the cold, when he jumped off and again undertook to walk. Too weak, however, and too lame to travel, he sank to the ground. A soldier told him to rise, or he would obey the orders, given by Salezar, to put all to death who could not keep up. Griffith made one feeble but ineffectual attempt. The effort was too much: he cast an imploring look at the soldier, and while doing so the brutal miscreant *knocked his brains out with a musket!* His blanket was then stripped from him, as the reward of his murderer, his ears were cut off, and he was thrown by the roadside, another feast for the buzzards and prairie wolves!

And how, it will be asked, did we feel while acts like these—acts that leave barbarian deeds of cruelty and blood far behind—were enacted in our midst? The reader must understand that not one of us knew but that he might be called upon as the next victim; that we were completely worn and broken down, sick, and dispirited. Callous, too, we had become; and although we could not look upon the horrible butchery of our comrades with indifference, we still knew that any interference on our part would bring certain death, without in any way aiding our unfortunate friends. Inly we prayed that a time might come when their death could be avenged—that the damnable crimes hourly enacted around us might be atoned for. There was the breast of many a hero in that sorry band; and in its pent-up chamber were recorded deep vows of vengeance *yet to be executed* upon Armijo and his congenial satellites.



It was not until about eight o'clock in the morning that the waters of the Rio Grande, which, in its course, had swept around the bend, a distance of more than one hundred and sixty miles, were seen by those in the advance. With hurried and eager steps we all pressed forward, for we knew that now, at least, we were to have food, water, and sleep. To attempt a delineation of our men as they appeared at that time were a bootless task. We had now been forty hours on the road, without food or water; in this time, although we had travelled ninety miles, we had had scarcely four hours' rest; the scanty wardrobe which each man carried upon his back, and which was all he possessed, had not been changed since we were made prisoners, and was now filled with every species of vermin known in Mexico. Add to this the sunken, hollow cheeks, pale and haggard countenances of men who had been unshaved for a month, and the reader will have a faint idea of our miserable aspect.

Salezar here ordered another ox killed—one that had made the entire journey with us from Austin, that had escaped the stampedes and Indian perils, and had borne a due share of the labour of dragging our wagons across the immense prairies of the West. With his former masters he had suffered and been captured, and now that he, too, was lame and broken down, weak and unable to travel, like them he was ordered to the sacrifice. It did not seem right to make a meal of an old and tried companion; yet necessity knows no law, neither has it feelings, and in three quarters of an hour after the poor animal was killed he was cooked and devoured, and his quondam masters were lying about on the grass fast asleep. In the afternoon we were awakened and ordered to march some miles farther—to a place where the animals of the guard could obtain better picking than at the camp where we were now lying. As we were about starting, a little incident occurred in which were strangely mixed the painful and the ludicrous. For some trifling cause Salezar drew his sword, and with the flat of it struck one of the prisoners a violent blow across the shoulders. The poor fellow had only learned one Spanish expression, *muchas gracias*—the common phrase employed in New Mexico to thank a person for any favour received. Thinking he must say something, and not knowing anything else to say, the unfortunate Texan ejaculated, "*Muchas gracias,*



*Senor !*" Another terrible whack from the sword of Salezar was followed by a shrug of the shoulders and another, "Many thanks, sir." The captain was now more infuriate than ever. To be thus publicly and openly thanked by a person upon whom he was inflicting a painful punishment, he looked upon as a defiance, and he accordingly redoubled his blows. How long this might have continued I am unable to say ; had not some of the friends of the man told him to hold his tongue, Salezar might have continued his blows until exhausted by the very labour. It is astonishing with what facility many of our men picked up enough Spanish to hold conversation with our guard, however little advance the punished individual just spoken of had made. The oaths, in particular, they soon learned, and in return they gave the Mexicans an insight into the many imprecatory idioms with which the English abounds. It is singular how much more easily men learn to swear and blaspheme in any language than to pray in it.

Our march, on the day after we had finished the Dead Man's Journey, was one of unusual length and severity ; numbers of the men giving out, miles before we reached our camping-ground. Salezar, as fortune ordained it, rode in advance this day, and although the rear-guard beat and mercilessly abused some of the more unfortunate stragglers, they did not go so far as to take their lives. One brute in particular, our more lame and unfortunate companions can never forget. His name, if I ever knew it, has now slipped from my memory, but to recall him to the recollections of all who made the gloomy journey from San Miguel to the Pass, I have only to refer to the fellow who was continually annoying us by his harsh and most discordant efforts at singing. As a general thing, the lower classes of Mexico have voices of rare sweetness and touching melody, and often, while at San Miguel, did we listen to the lays of a party of soldiers with pleasure, as, with tones harmoniously blending, they sang a rude but cheerful catch in praise of Santa Anna ; but the notes of this scoundrel were of the most grating nature. Continually was he trotting his mule up and down the line, uttering sounds which were almost demoniacal, and, as though he thought it a fit accompaniment, he sought every occasion to insult, ride over, and strike the sick and the lame, the halt and the weary. Not without shuddering did we hear the horrible tones of this fellow's



voice, as he would approach us ; and I cannot doubt that this simple mention will bring the grating sounds again ringing in the ears of those who heard him, and who may happen to read this chapter.

Some of the poor prisoners parted with their shoes and shirts, and in many cases even with their blankets, in payment for a ride of a few miles—the unfeeling owners of the animals ever ready to take advantage of such as were unable to walk. In some few instances men were found among the Mexicans who had humanity enough to take up some unfortunate Texan and carry him a few miles ; but those instances were extremely rare.

It was pitchy dark when we reached our halting-place this night, a grove of cotton-woods, within thirty miles of El Paso del Norte, and so tired were the men that a majority of them sank supperless upon the ground, too weak to cook the scanty ration of meal which was distributed among them.

We had been but a few moments in this camp before Van Ness, with whom Salezar intrusted many of his secrets, informed Falconer and myself that the miscreant intended to search us all the next day : he suspected, from many little circumstances, that there was still no inconsiderable sum of money among the wretched prisoners, and if his suspicions were true, he determined to gain possession of it.

Knowing, full well, that his search would extend to every portion of our tattered vestments, making it impossible to hide our valuables about our persons, we now tasked our wits to devise some scheme wherewith to cheat Salezar of his anticipated plunder. Various plans were revolved in our minds, but dismissed as not feasible, until finally I bethought me of one which promised success even though the search should prove ever so rigorous. It was to make a small batch of cakes with a quantity of meal we had in a bag, the cakes to be seasoned with our doubloons and such other gold pieces as we had in our possession. This plan was adopted at once, and in an hour, one kneading the dough and forming the cakes, while the other watched the sentinel on duty to see that he did not discover our trick, we had our money all carefully baked, with the exception of a few dollars. The latter was carried openly in our pockets to avoid suspicion, and for its loss we cared but little so that the main amount was saved. My gold watch and chain I gave to Van Ness, who carefully folded them in his cravat and tied them about



his neck. As the prisoners had frequently made their meal into cakes of similar size and appearance, we had full confidence of outwitting the avaricious scoundrel should he make his threatened search.

On resuming our march the next morning, Salezar left the oxen which had been furnished for our sustenance on the road, and of which sixteen were still left, behind him : with the oxen he also left some thirty horses and mules, animals then in the possession of his guard, but which, it was afterward ascertained, had been either stolen from the inhabitants of El Paso by their present owners themselves, or purchased from the Apaches with the full knowledge that they had been stolen. This bit of rascality arranged satisfactorily by Salezar, and a small guard being left behind to herd the animals out of sight of the main road, we were again on the move.\* About sunset we arrived at an encampment directly in the mouth of the gorge through which the Rio Grande has forced a passage—the well-known gap in the mountains called by the Mexicans El Paso del Norte, or the Pass of the North, and within eight miles of the large town of El Paso.

I have said that the sun was about setting when we arrived at our camping-ground : that luminary lacked some half hour yet of his going down, and never have I seen him sink below the western horizon with such a glow of splendour and magnificence around him as on that occasion. Immediately in front of us, running nearly north and south, rose a chain of frowning mountains, through which, although at the time we could not tell how or where, the Rio Grande has forced its way. The table-land on which we stood reached far as the eye could see to the west. Those who have watched the sun in his setting, may have fancied that on approaching

\* The pack mule which Salezar took from me, at the time of our arrest, he frequently rode upon the journey between San Miguel and El Paso. She was a strong, powerful animal, but an extremely hard one to ride, having, in addition to a trick of throwing people over her head, a jolting and most uneasy and unsteady trot. To show the cool effrontery of Dimasio, he complained, on several occasions, of the gait of the animal, and said that he was disappointed in her ! It is generally considered indelicate to “look a gift horse in the mouth,” or allude to any little faults he may possess ; I do not see why the same rule should not apply to a stolen mule. That she might take the whim to throw Salezar over her head, as had frequently been her wont when her riders were Americans, was a result I am frank enough to say I hoped for ; but I could never learn that she indulged in any of her old tricks while in the hands of her new master.



near his apparent resting-place he drops, as it were, several feet at a time, then lingers stationary for a moment, then drops towards his nightly retreat again, as if hurrying to finish his day's work and reach his evening couch of rest. So it was on this occasion, and from some peculiarity in the atmosphere the broad face of the god of day appeared of deeper yet more subdued red, and of four times its ordinary size. The evening air was of a most wooing temperature—mild and bland. The eastern sky received a reflection of softened yet golden lustre, while the mountain sides were clothed with a gorgeous but mellow atmosphere, and the shadows sent among the frowning clefts by the last rays of the setting sun were softened and suffused by the universal glow. While contemplating the lovely scene, and lost to all around me in admiration of its rare and almost holy beauty, I was suddenly aroused by the report that a poor fellow named Gates was dying in one of the wagons. He had taken a severe cold the night we were all penned in the two small rooms, and inflammation of the lungs had ensued; and now, without medicine, without the kind offices of relations, without the thousand charities and home-comforts that are not to be found in such a wo-worn band as ours, he was dying, and amongst those who would deny him even the last sad rites of sepulture!

On looking towards the wagon in which the unfortunate man was lying, it was evident he had but a few moments to live: there was a glassy wildness in his eye, a slight rattle and convulsive throe about his neck, which too plainly denoted that his sufferings were soon to terminate. At such a time as this it would hardly seem credible that one could be found, clothed in the outward semblance of humanity, fiendish enough to inflict farther pain and anguish upon his fellow-being: yet such was the fact, and a case of more heartless cruelty up to this time probably stands not on record.

Gates retained his senses, and had just asked one of his comrades, in weak and broken accents, for a cup of water. He had scarcely swallowed it ere a young Mexican, who went by the name of Ramon, took up an empty musket standing by the wagon, and after wantonly pointing it directly in the face of the dying man, snapped it! The latter, unconscious whether the musket was loaded or not, raised his hands convulsively to his face and shrunk instinctively back. The wretch, apparently enjoying the torture he was thus inflicting,



again pointed and snapped the gun. This was too much for one who was already wrestling with death. He gave one shudder, his limbs relaxed, and all was over! He was instantly dragged from the wagon by our merciless guard, his ears were cut off by order of Salezar, and the body was thrown by the roadside

“ a stiffen'd corse,  
Stretch'd out and bleaching in the northern blast !”

On the morning succeeding this revolting act of cruelty, which was the 5th of November, we started upon our last march under the detestable Salezar. Two or three miles above El Paso, and immediately on the eastern base of the ridge of mountains, we were obliged to ford the Rio Grande at a fall. The river was waist, and in some places even chin deep, the bottom uneven and rocky, while the cold current of water ran with such force that we were obliged to hold each other by the hand in strings to prevent being washed down the stream and drowned. Chilled completely through, and with feet cut and bruised by the sharp and jagged rocks, we were finally fortunate in making the passage, the rear-guard upon their mules and horses whipping and swearing at the lame and weak stragglers of our party, who scarcely had strength to buffet with the swift-running stream.

Once safely across, we were ordered to form in sections of four, while the guard paraded in regular order on either side. The last command of Salezar, before galloping forward to give notice of our arrival, was to shoot the Texans who should leave the position in the ranks assigned them! In this order, and with this last threat hanging over us, we were marched into the beautiful and romantic town or city of El Paso.

Our feelings, on entering this town, it is almost impossible to describe. On the route from San Miguel we had been regaled, by our guard, with innumerable tales of the ill-treatment we might expect on reaching the Pass, and also with speculations as to our ultimate fate. Some said that we should be marched by the nearest road to Matamoros, and thence shipped to the United States or Texas; others, again, gave it as their decided opinion that we should be shot, so soon as orders could be received from Santa Anna. As to the two latter opinions, we gave no credit to either of them; as to our being treated worse by the inhabitants of the lower country than we had been by the New Mexicans, that we



knew could not be, as Salezar had taxed his ingenuity to the utmost in devising means to harass and torture us. Still our feelings were sensitively alive as the time rapidly approached when we were to be placed under new masters, and our minds unusually active in speculations upon our future lot.

As we turned the corner of a street leading into the principal plaza, we saw one of our companions, who had left San Miguel the morning before us, standing upon a distant house-top. Another turn, and Doctor Whittaker, with two or three Texan officers, was seen standing by a small bridge thrown across one of the irrigating canals which traverse this pleasant town in every direction. They appeared to have the liberty of parole, if nothing more, were clean shaved, and neatly enough dressed, and bore every appearance of having fallen into kinder hands, and to have received infinitely better treatment than had fallen to our lot.

In a few minutes more, in presence of the alcalde and other officers, we were marched into a large yard, having rooms on every side, and then, after being counted, consigned to the keeping of a new guard. Shrewd and close observers of physiognomy had we all become by this time—we looked at the countenances of those who were now over us, and a single glance sufficed to assure us that we might expect better treatment; nor were we disappointed.

In two hours after our arrival, and without the most remote expectation of any such good fortune, the Texan prisoners found themselves, in squads of six or eight, billeted about at the different houses of the inhabitants, and feasting upon the best the place afforded. Well-cooked meats, eggs, the finest bread, and in many cases even the wines of the place were served out to them, and in an abundance to which for months they had been strangers. From the different doors and windows they could see small knots of their late guards passing and re-passing; and with the recollection of their recent brutal treatment fresh within them, they did, in the fulness of their hearts, heap upon their former insolent and overbearing, but now craven and powerless enemies, all the Spanish terms of indignity and reproach they had learned while in their company, mixed with good hearty curses in the vernacular whenever they ran out of foreign objurgations.

In the mean time, Falconer, Van Ness, and myself were taken to the house of the commandant of this military department, Don J. M. Elias Gonzalez, or, as he was



generally termed, General Elias, a well-bred, liberal, and gentlemanly officer. No sooner had he been made acquainted with the conduct of Salezar, then he expressed great indignation; and as our men had suffered so much from want of food and excessive fatigue, he at once said they should be allowed three days' rest to recruit and strengthen.

The family of General Elias consisted of his *prima*, or first cousin, a portly, handsome, and good-hearted lady, some forty years of age, who attended to his household affairs, and a well-educated young nephew, on a visit from Sonora. His name was Don Jesus,\* and to him we were all under obligations for repeated acts of kindness and attention. Captain Francisco Ochoa, said to have been an aid-de-camp of the Emperor Iturbide, was also a guest at the house—a good-humoured, laughing, and dashing officer of some forty years of age, although at first view he seemed much younger. Ochoa was frank and soldier like in his bearing, expressed the greatest abhorrence of Salezar and his herd of *ladrones* and *picaros*† as he called them, and in travelling with us some five or six hundred miles, ever proved himself a friend and a gentleman.

About five o'clock in the afternoon a servant brought us in cakes and chocolate, the latter of the richest quality and most delicious flavour. At eight o'clock General McLeod and Mr. Navarro, who took all their meals with our generous host, arrived, when we immediately sat down to a well-arranged and sumptuous supper. It was the first table we had seen for five months—so with the chairs. What a contrast! On that very morning, and within twenty yards of the spot where the body of the unfortunate Gates was lying, Falconer, Van Ness, and myself had hastily swallowed a meal of badly-made mush, upon the ground, our minds full of misgivings as to the treatment we might receive on getting out of the hands of Salezar—now we were seated at a table covered with luxuries, the guests of a gentleman attentive to every want. Even the fact that we were still prisoners was forgotten.

As the mind of the reader wanders back through the

\* No relation to our old acquaintance of New Mexican memory, but a different personage altogether.

† Loafers, scoundrels, thieves—the terms mean anything and everything opprobrious.



gloomy vista of the preceding five months, it will find but few bright spots for the memory to linger upon. During that time we had been living "out of doors"—the ground, whether wet or dry, warm or cold, our only bed—the sky, whether blue or black, clear or cloudy, our only canopy. For weeks, I might almost say months previous to our capture, we had lived upon an allowance which barely saved us from starvation, and even this small pittance of food was more fitting the mouths of prairie wolves than human beings. After our capture, in addition to the cruel insults and indignities that were heaped upon us, we were fed and driven along our involuntary pilgrimage under treatment that would have claimed the intervention of civil laws if inflicted upon droves of cattle, sheep, or hogs in a civilized land. Let the reader recollect these facts, and he will not marvel that our hearts were now rejoiced within us, prisoners though we were, on once more finding ourselves in the midst of plenty and treated as men. But our supper is getting cold, and as it is the first we have had for nearly half a year, we must commence upon it.

It consisted of a variety of dishes, all well cooked, and, but that some of them may have been seasoned rather too highly with red pepper, garlic, or onions, for Anglo-Saxon tastes, all extremely palatable. And here were veritable chairs, knives and forks, plates, tumblers, and the many appurtenances of a supper table—we had not entirely forgotten their uses, as the cook of our kind host could testify. The *vino del pais*, or wine of the country, too, was placed before us, of a quality far from inferior, and in the greatest profusion. The inhabitants of El Paso, or many of them, drink it from tumblers of the largest size, and in quantities which would startle a Frenchman over his claret, or a New-England farmer over his cider—I have reference, in speaking of the latter, to times before the establishment of temperance societies and root beer associations. Supper over, some two hours were spent in smoking and conversation, when we retired to bed.

Here was another comfort which for months we had not enjoyed—had almost forgotten—and for a long time we could not close our eyes in sleep, so novel was the luxury. We were under a roof. Our beds were of the very best—sheets as white as the driven snow, and pillow-cases neatly fringed and of the finest linen. We kicked, tossed, and rolled about



for hours; and our various antics, some of them ludicrous enough, might be likened to the feats of tumblers in a ring. Sleep finally overtook us, nor was it broken until a little before sunrise, when a neat and pretty girl brought us in cakes and chocolate. Without his chocolate in the morning, the Mexican gentleman would be [miserable all day.

After partaking of our chocolate, we arose refreshed and invigorated, and with feelings very different from those of the previous morning. At nine o'clock, we had breakfast, consisting of some five or six courses, with wine, but no coffee. At two, dinner was served, late in the afternoon we again had chocolate and cakes, and at eight o'clock supper. I have been thus particular in giving the number and order of our meals to shew the difference between the customs there and in this country.

Although meats may be seen in profusion, at both breakfast and supper, on the table of the Mexican gentleman in the northern and middle departments of the Republic, the principal and most substantial meal, as with us, is the dinner. The meal generally commences with mutton soup or broth—then comes a dish of boiled mutton, frequently followed by a stew of the same meat. A favourite dish with the Mexicans in the State of Chihuahua is made of the blood of sheep, fried and seasoned, which is very palatable. Chickens and eggs, cooked in different ways, but the former never roasted as with us, make their appearance during the meal. A standing article is the *chile guisado*, mention of which I have already made in a former chapter. *Frijoles*,\* a species of dark beans of large size, stewed or fried in mutton fat and not too highly seasoned, wind up the substantial part of a dinner, breakfast, or supper, and seldom is this favourite and national dish omitted. In fact, *frijoles*, especially to the lower order of Mexicans, are what *potatoes* are to the Irish—they can live very well so long as they have them in abundance, and are lost without them. A failure of the bean crop in Mexico would be looked upon as a national calamity.

Among the higher order of Mexicans the dinner finishes with fruits, *dulces* or sweetmeats, and the never-failing paper

\* Pronounced *freeholeys* by the Mexicans. From the similarity in the pronunciation, our men always called them *freeholders*.



or shuck cigar. In the southern department these cigars are manufactured of tobacco, neatly rolled in paper, put up in bunches, and then sold at a low price; but up in the States of Chihuahua, Sonora, and New Mexico, and more particularly the latter, every man is provided with a small pouch of *punche*, a species of plant somewhat resembling tobacco, for the cultivation of the latter is specially prohibited except in some of the southern departments. In another pouch or case he carries a parcel of corn husks, and a flint and steel. With these materials he makes his *cigarrito*, strikes a fire, and smokes almost incessantly. Women and men are alike addicted to the practice, and the prettiest *senora* in the land can be seen at almost any time with a *cigarrito* in her mouth, the smoke puffing from her nose in two straight volumes, somewhat resembling the escape pipes of a double-engine steamer on a small scale. It may be thought singular, however, that the children of either sex are not addicted to smoking. It appears to be a habit taken up after the person has attained full growth, and when once contracted, is never abandoned.

On the afternoon after our arrival at El Paso, and while we were drinking wine, and partaking of a truly sumptuous dinner at the table of the commandant, the notorious Salezar entered the room, the object of his visit being to render an account of his stewardship in relation to the Texan prisoners. He appeared struck with mute astonishment, as his eye glanced in the direction of our table, at seeing those whom he had so recently treated like brutes, now in such excellent quarters, and associating with an officer infinitely above him; and there was an air of sneaking and cowardly inquietude about the monster, as he opened his business with General Elias.

He began by saying that Governor Armijo had intrusted him with the charge of guarding a certain number of men from San Miguel to El Paso; that he had turned over the whole number, with the exception of five, who had unfortunately died upon the road; and to prove that they had really died, and had not escaped, he *had brought their ears*, at the same time throwing upon the table five pairs of them, which he had strung upon a strip of buckskin! General Elias at once told him that he had murdered, basely murdered, three of these men. The miscreant denied this charge, at the same time turning a black look in the direction



where we were quietly smoking. He said that he was a brave man, and that when he was in the advance, his master, Armijo, could always sleep in quiet and security. The commandant coolly told him that the business before them had nothing to do with his personal prowess and bravery, or with the estimation in which Armijo held him; they were talking of three men whom he had cruelly put to death for no crime. Salezar, finding that his superior officer had abundant proofs of the facts, made no farther denial; but he turned upon Van Ness a look of bitter hatred, for he had treated him with so much kindness and consideration upon the road, that he supposed in him, at least, he would find a defender. Van Ness had very properly informed General Elias of every circumstance that had occurred upon the road, and the cunning Salezar, now seeing that he had no one to defend him, made no farther denials.

The commandant next told Salezar that there were sixteen head of cattle, honestly belonging to the Texan prisoners, which had been left some thirty or forty miles back upon the road. This was a thunderbolt to the scoundrel, for he had fondly hoped to secure these cattle as his own plunder. With a twitch of the shoulders he began to stammer forth some excuse or denial; but he was cut short by General Elias, who all the while preserved his temper, with the remark that there were also a number of horses and mules left at the same camp, which he had strong reasons to believe were the property of some of the citizens El Paso. At all events they must be immediately sent for—cattle, horses, and all—and until they were all brought in, and their brands and marks examined, Captain Dimasio Salezar must consider himself under arrest. The scoundrel gave us another scowl of mingled hatred and revenge at the conclusion of this interview, and then skulked from the room, an abject, pitiful wretch.



## CHAPTER XX.

**Ramon Ortiz, the young Cura of El Paso.—A pleasant Ride with the Cura.—Description of El Paso.—Its irrigating Canals, Streets, and Fruits.—An opportunity to vex Salezar improved.—Last Encounter with that Miscreant.—Departure from El Paso.—Hospitality of the Inhabitants.—A Camp without Water.—Ochoa's Attention to our Wants.—Mexican Carts and Mexican Character.—Opposition of the Inhabitants to Improvements.—Arrival at the "Diamond of the Desert," a noted Spring.—Difficult Passage of the Sand Mountains.—A travelling Stone.—The "Well of the Star."—Appearance of the Texan Prisoners.—Laughing at Misery.**

Among the daily visitors at the house of General Elias, was the young and generous *cura* of El Paso, Ramon Ortiz, to whom I was particularly indebted for many attentions, and whose acts of disinterested kindness to all the prisoners, it is impossible to forget. The young priest could not be more than twenty-five years of age, and was of a mild and benevolent countenance—in short, there was an open and ingenuous expression in his really handsome face, that at once endeared him to every one. For some cause or other, he was unremitting in his attentions to me, continually seeking opportunities to do some delicate act of kindness, which, by the manner of its bestowal, showed that he possessed all the more refined feelings of our nature.

On one occasion he asked me if I would not be pleased to see the town and visit him at his residence, some mile or two distant from the house of General Elias. On my accepting his invitation, he sent a servant for one of his horses for my use. The servant soon returned with a noble animal, richly caparisoned, and the young cura mounting his mule, we rode over the beautiful town.

The situation of El Paso is delightful. Seated in a beautiful and fertile valley, a circle of mountains on its northern and western sides break off and neutralize the cold winds which sweep from the snowy summits in the region of Santa Fé. The thoroughfares of the town are for the



most part wide and airy, and on either side runs a cool and rippling stream of transparent water, brought from the Rio Grande, by means of irrigating canals, so that it can at any time be turned upon the vineyards or grain-fields, when the land requires it. These delicious streams are shaded by rows of large, overarching trees, planted with great regularity, while the plain but neat dwellings of the inhabitants are, many of them, built among clusters of apple and other fruit trees. The cultivation of the vine, with the manufacture of wine and raisins, appears to be a source of no inconsiderable profit to the inhabitants, who, take them as a body, are more honest, industrious, cleanly, and better disposed towards foreigners than those of any town of equal size I passed through in my long journey.

Arrived at the residence of my kind friend, a neat dwelling surrounded by fruit trees and vines, he called a servant to take charge of the animals, and at once led the way to the interior. Here I found Captain Caldwell and a number of our officers, comfortably enjoying the hospitalities of the young priest, and loud in their praises of his kind attentions and exceeding liberality; for they had all been provided with neat and clean clothing, by their charitable entertainer.

To myself he was even more unremitting in his offices of attention and kindness. He asked me to write my name, and then give the correct pronunciation of it, after which he gave me his own on a strip of paper. Fortunately for me, when first captured, I had been able to secrete a valuable gold pen, neatly encased in silver, which also served as a handle, and this I at once presented to the cura. He at first was reluctant to accept the pen, fearing that I might be in want of it, but on being assured that it was of no real service to me, he received it with new protestations of friendship.

During a visit of some two hours, young Ortiz appeared to be studying my every want. In addition to an excellent dinner, with wine of his own making, which he gave me, he invited me into his private study, where a bath was provided. Hardly had I partaken of this luxury, before a girl brought me clean flannel and linen throughout—and when I say that for the previous seven weeks, I had had no change of clothing, and that the vermin which infest the lower orders of Mexico, had taken forcible possession of all my ragged and dirty vestments, the luxury of once more arraying



myself in clean linen will be appreciated. But the liberality of Ortiz did not stop here, for, notwithstanding I told him I had a sufficiency, and obstinately refused taking it until farther resistance would have been rude and almost insulting, he still pressed a sum of money into my hands. It was carefully wrapped in paper, and the amount I did not at the time know. From its weight I knew, however, that it was specie, and hence my extreme reluctance to receive it at his hands. He may have thought it an imperative duty thus to press it upon my acceptance, in order to cancel the obligation he evidently considered himself under for the pen I had presented him.

Towards sunset, the cura having ordered the same horse to be again saddled for me, we left his quiet and hospitable mansion for the residence of General Elias; and if I before had reason to thank Ortiz for his kindness, I soon had still greater cause of gratitude for the opportunity he gave me, although unintentional on his part, of repaying, with interest, the many instalments of indignity and abuse I had received at the hands of Salezar—in short, of making this latter person completely and perfectly unhappy.

Prominent among the vicious traits of Salezar was his insatiable avarice. In the leather panniers which contained my clothing, when we were taken prisoners, he found three or four pairs of heavily-gilt spurs, articles which I had purchased in New Orleans as presents to such Mexicans as might shew me attentions on my journey through that country. These spurs he had sold for a mere song, as they were of a pattern different from those used in New Mexico, and as he supposed their real value trifling. A telescope which he had taken from Mr. Falconer, and which was an instrument of great value, he had parted with for a few dollars—not one-tenth, perhaps, of its first cost.

On the road from San Miguel he had spoken of these articles to one of my comrades, and mentioned the prices he had received for them. Out of pure hatred to the wretch, and from a desire to vex and goad him, my friend expressed great surprise that Salezar had parted with them, and more especially the spurs, at such a sacrifice—said they were of pure gold and extremely rich workmanship, and that they would have been worth twenty times the sum he received for them, to melt down.

This story fretted and chafed the avaricious wretch



excessively. He ground his teeth for being such a fool, and with an oath promised that should a similar opportunity to plunder offer itself, he would make more money out of it than he had done in the present instance. In fact, nothing could exceed his rage, and he vented deep imprecations upon himself for allowing such golden opportunities to escape with comparatively so little gain.—So much by way of episode—I will now relate the manner in which Ortiz helped me to punish Salezar.

While at the cura's house he had told me that whatever jewellery I had saved I might now wear or expose openly, as there was no farther danger of my being robbed—I was now out of the hands of the *picaros* of New Mexico, and would find officers on the route to the capital who were gentlemen, and who would not take my private or personal property. With these assurances, and to show that I had implicit confidence in his words, I immediately displayed about my person, rather ostentatiously, perhaps, a valuable breastpin, together with the gold watch and chain which I had kept hid from the searching eyes of the greedy Salezar.

After leaving the house of the cura we rode leisurely along until we reached the principal plaza, taking a different route from that which we had travelled in the morning. Almost the first person I saw, on entering the plaza, was the detestable Salezar, standing in front of a small *tienda*, or store, and conversing with some of his officers. Here was an opportunity to shew the fellow that I had outwitted him, and I determined that it should not slip by unimproved. Telling Ortiz that I wished to purchase a handkerchief, or some trifling article, he kindly held my horse while I dismounted. As I walked directly towards the little knot of our former oppressors I placed a hand in each pocket of my pantaloons, which were now tolerably well filled with the doubloons and other gold pieces I had taken from the cakes after reaching El Paso. Grasping as many of them as I could in either hand, I let them drop jingling to the bottom of my pockets when within five yards of Salezar, and so that he could plainly hear them. The sound, I am confident, entered his soul. When immediately in front of the avaricious wretch I gave as loud and as important a "*hem*" as I was able, and then, with a consequential swagger, and as much ostentation as I could assume, drew forth my gold watch, as if to ascertain the time. I gave the fellow one



glance and was satisfied. His face was a perfect index to the workings of his selfish mind, and with a pleasure, malicious perhaps, I watched it. That he would not close his eyes in sleep that night I felt confident, so well I knew his nature. No punishment I could inflict would have been so severe. That black scowl so full of hatred, avarice, and all the worst feelings of the human heart!—to me it was “a receipt in full” for all the indignities and injuries I had received at his hands—that look, so full of rage, baffled desire, and unsated avarice, more than paid for the property of which he had stripped me, and the many cruelties he had inflicted upon myself and friends.

After this last and most gratifying interview with Salezar, for I have never seen him since, I remounted my horse, and with Ortiz rode to my quarters at the house of General Elias. I more than half suspected that my young friend was aware of my object in thus “showing off” before Salezar; but not a word did he say.

During my visit to the house of the cura, a courier had arrived from Mexico. The only news that in the least interested us was a mention made of the departure of Colonel Cooke and Dr. Brenham, with the first party, from Chihuahua, and a report that they had been well treated on the road.

About noon, the next day, we took our departure from El Paso. As we were on the point of leaving the house of General Elias, to join the main party, the servant of young Ortiz arrived with a horse, saddle, and bridle for my use as far as Chihuahua, a distance of nearly three hundred miles. Of this most unexpected charity I had not before received the least intimation; nor did the liberality of the incomparable cura end here. He ordered his domestics to bake two or three cart loads of excellent bread for the use of the prisoners on the road, and sent his own teams of oxen to transport it. To those who were most in need he gave articles of comfortable clothing, and imitating the charitable example of their pastor, the citizens were very liberal in their gifts. Mrs. Stevenson, the wife of an American merchant who was absent at the time, was unceasing in her acts of kindness. Although a Mexican by birth, and not understanding a word of our language, she was indefatigable in her exertions to procure clothing, provisions, and necessities for our comfort and subsistence on the road.



The entire population of El Paso—men, women, and children—turned out to see us off; General Elias sent his nephew, the young Don Jesus, with his own private carriage for the accommodation of General McLeod, and Messrs. Navarro, Falconer, and Van Ness, as far as Chihuahua. A very gentlemanly man, Colonel Morales, provided several of our officers with mules to the same city, and his example was followed by others whose names I have now forgotten. General Elias himself, accompanied by the cura and several of the wealthier and more respectable inhabitants, rode some distance with us, and after expressing the hope that we might arrive safely at the city of Mexico and be speedily liberated, bade us an affectionate farewell. Seldom have I parted from a friend with more real regret than with Ortiz, and as I shook him by the hand for the last time, and bade him, perhaps, an eternal adieu, I thought if ever a noble heart beat in man it was in the breast of this young, generous, and liberal priest. Professing a different religion from mine, and one too, that I had been taught to believe, in Mexico inculcated a jealous intolerance towards those of any other faith, I could expect from him neither favour nor regard. How surprised was I, then, to find him liberal to a fault, constant in his attentions, and striving to make my situation as agreeable as the circumstances would admit. I can never hope for an opportunity to repay all his kindness to me, and must content myself with this simple tribute to his worth. His charity and his manly virtues adorn the faith which he professes and illustrates by his life; and should this page ever meet his eye, let it assure him of the deep respect and reverence with which the moral excellence of the pious cura of El Paso inspired more than one Protestant American.

Almost the only place in Mexico I turned my back upon with anything like regret was the lovely town or city of El Paso. Its delightful situation in a quiet and secluded valley, its rippling artificial brooks, its shady streets, its teeming and luxurious vineyards, its dry, pure air, and mild climate, and, above all, its kind and hospitable inhabitants, all held me to the spot by their endearing ties. What its population may be I have not the means of ascertaining, neither can I give the extent of the fertile valley in which it is situated; but if I may be allowed to make a rough estimate, I should put down the number of inhabitants at from



five to seven thousand, and the settled portions of the valley at some eight or ten miles in length by from one to three in width.\* With the single exception of the little walled town of Carazal, which is rapidly depopulating, there is scarcely even a rancho, or small farm, within hundreds of miles of El Paso—Socorro being the nearest town north, while the city of Chihuahua is the first settlement as the traveller journeys southward. Far removed from neighbours, the rural inhabitants of El Paso have made a garden, an oasis, as it were, in the midst of a desert, and appear to have been in a great measure uncontaminated by association with the world beyond. We here found several families of Castilian blood, unmixed with even a shade of the Indian—and we found them liberal, gentlemanly, and of most courteous address, although born on the spot, and having had the advantages neither of travel nor association. Even the very lowest of the population—and here we saw little of that squalid poverty which characterizes almost every town in Mexico—even the poorest of the inhabitants treated us with respect and kindness, insulting neither our religion, our country, nor our unfortunate position. Surely, not one of the Texan prisoners can ever think of El Paso, or the dwellers therein, without lively gratitude.

Our first day's march, on leaving this place, was short, bringing us to the last well or spring of sweet water we were to find before reaching a dry and sandy desert—in fact, we were obliged to travel nearly the whole of the two succeeding days before we reached water. The road from El Paso to Chihuahua runs, for the greater part of the way through a dry and barren region, although there are some fertile valleys as the traveller approaches the latter city; and as there are no settlements or houses on the way, we were again compelled to make our lodging upon the ground. But as I now had procured an extra blanket, the cold did not prevent me from sleeping, as was the case in New Mexico.

Taking advantage of the large escort which accompanied

\* I have never seen any account of this isolated town except a mere notice from the pen of General Pike, who was marched through it, a prisoner, almost forty years since. Some of the older inhabitants asked us several questions in relation to this gallant officer, for they well remembered his passage through the town, but had never heard of his death.



the prisoners, the inhabitants of El Paso sent their full crop of fruits and other products under its convoy. These commodities consisted, for the most part, of apples, raisins, pears, onions, and no inconsiderable quantity of wine and Paso brandy, all of which find a ready market at Chihuahua: in return, the owners take back sugar, chocolate, paper, cigars, and also their English and fancy goods. Their reason for accompanying us was the protection they supposed our guard afforded against the much-dreaded Apaches, who are ever on the look-out from the mountains, ready to pounce upon any travellers seen upon this route. So numerous was the company that now availed itself of our escort, that the road, for a long distance, was filled with pack mules and Mexican carts. A more miscellaneous procession, take it altogether, has probably never been seen since the days of Peter the Hermit. The exact number I did not take the trouble to ascertain; but including prisoners, guards, traders, muleteers, drivers, servants, and camp-followers in the shape of women and children, there could not be much less than a thousand, and in the order in which we marched, the motley crowd must have extended more than a mile. The dress of our guard, which was for the most part composed of the militia of El Paso, differed but little from that of the same class in New Mexico—ragged and motley, and having no pretensions to uniformity. They were better armed, perhaps, than their neighbours under Salezar, having a greater number of carbines, or old Spanish muskets: yet they were all on foot, and were weak and inefficient in every way. Many of them had no shoes, but in their stead they wore sandals of their own make—rudely manufactured, and affording little protection save to the soles of their feet. The leading traits in the characters of these men appeared to be much good-nature, and a disposition to treat the prisoners with the utmost leniency—points in which they differed materially from the savage brutes who dwell north of them.

I have several times spoken of Mexican carts—a more rude contrivance, take it all in all, can scarcely be conceived. If in this country of locomotives, railroad cars, and well-built stage-coaches, the searcher after antiquarian relics and curiosities, should, by any chance, meet with a Mexican cart, he would look upon it as the first, the original attempt of man to construct a kind of wheel-carriage. Neither iron nor steel, paint nor polish, spoke-shave nor plane, is used in



its fabrication—but give a Mexican a sufficiency of brittle-cotton-wood and rawhide, and he has the materials; give him but one of his own clumsy and ill-contrived axes and an auger, and he has all the tools he wants wherewith to furnish a cart. Out of the first cutting of a cotton-wood he hews an oblong block, through the centre of which he bores and burns a hole for the axletree; he next digs, you cannot say cuts, two pieces from the same tree, forming them into segments of a circle, which he pins to the sides of the aforesaid oblong mass by means of long, wooden pegs. The wheel is now finished. Should it not happen to be round, it is of little consequence—it is near enough that shape for all Mexican purposes. From the same wood he next cuts his axletree and the body of his cart, the latter fastened together by raw-hide. Then comes the tongue, also dug from the same source whence came the wheels, and the vehicle is finished. When in motion, the wheels stagger, wobble and wander about, apparently in every direction but the right one, and as they slowly revolve upon their axletrees, the want of friendly grease is made painfully manifest by the most distressing groans and screeches—excruciating noises which can be heard for miles. Should his journey be of but one or two days' duration, the driver only carries one or two extra axletrees to guard against breakages; if he is to be absent a week, one half of his load consists of those indispensables, else he never gets to his journey's end. With all his precautions, however, he frequently meets with breakdowns for which there is no remedy; and were not the wrecks instantly seized by the next passer for firewood, the principal roads in the northern departments of Mexico, on either side, would long since have been fenced with broken-down carts.

And then it would fairly drive the substantial American farmer distracted, to see the manner in which the Mexican oxen are compelled to draw these carts. They are not yoked and allowed the full use and strength of their shoulders and chests, but a straight piece of timber is placed directly on their heads behind the horns, and this is tied to the latter with rawhide. Another piece of rawhide is next made fast around the centre of the stick, and this, in turn, is tied to the tongue of the cart or to the next pair of unfortunate oxen. In this way, four, five, and even six pairs of cattle are frequently seen pushing, as it were, not drawing, a cart



along, while a single yoke of oxen in the United States could do the same work with all ease. Yet nothing could convince the Mexicans that their mode is not the best. Their forefathers, five generations back, adopted this system, and their rule is never to alter. So with their long, heavy, clumsy ploughs; three times the space of ground might be ploughed with one of the modern improvement, yet they will suffer no innovation. Their axes, with long, straight handles, would be small hoes were the bladders turned round after the manner of those implements: while the Mexican is pecking away at a tree, in process of felling it, the American would cut down, chop, and split one of the same size into cord-wood, and very likely have time to pile it—yet the patient Mexican pecks away, regardless of labour and time, so that his object is eventually attained. Strange that with a country as fair as any upon the face of the earth, abounding in every species of soil, climate, fruit, and mineral, the Mexicans will not profit by the lessons, and adopt the systems of their Saxon neighbours. They pertinaciously cling to the customs of their forefathers, and are becoming every year more and more impoverished—in short, they are morally, physically, and intellectually distanced in the great race of improvement which is run in almost every other quarter of the earth. Give them but tortillas, frijoles, and chile colorado to supply their animal wants for the day, and seven tenths of the Mexicans are satisfied; and so they will continue to be until the race becomes extinct or amalgamated with Anglo-Saxon stock; for no political change, no revolution, can uproot that inherent indolence and antipathy to change, which in this age of improvement and advancement must sooner or later work their ruin and downfall. In these wonder-working days of steam, to stand still is to retrograde. But I will leave speculation, and return to matter of fact.

The second night after our departure from El Paso we encamped in the midst of an arid and sandy plain, without water and with but scanty picking for the large *cavallada* of horses, mules, and cattle. To remedy any want on the part of the former, however, the officer who had now the charge of us, Captain Ochoa, had provided and filled several large casks at the springs and wells we left in the morning. A sufficiency of beef, bread, and salt was provided for the men, our marches were neither so long nor



so tiresome as while under Salezar, and as carts had been provided at El Paso especially for such as might be sick or unable to travel, our sufferings were now comparatively light.

Towards noon, on the third day, we arrived at a celebrated water-hole, called the *Diamond of the Desert*.\* Immediately beyond were large mountains of loose sand, and as for a distance of some ten miles it was impossible to drag the carts over without doubling the teams, we were ordered to remain behind until all had made the passage. These sand mountains were plainly visible from our camp, their yellow tops entirely destitute of vegetation of any kind, and presenting an appearance of dreary sterility.

The 10th of November we spent in lying, sleeping, or walking about camp, mending our tattered clothing and washing such articles as most needed an introduction to the turbid spring near us. This Diamond of the Desert was by no means of the first water, the dark and sluggish element being brackish and extremely unpalatable; but as it is the only spring, if it can be dignified with that title, in any direction for miles, it is a general stopping-place for all travellers between El Paso and Chihuahua. There are two things about it which render it invaluable—it quenches thirst and never fails. A thousand men with horses might encamp around it for a week, so we were told, and it would bear the heavy demand upon it without exhaustion. The soil is exceedingly poor in the vicinity, having nothing in the way of vegetation except a few scattering thorns and dwarfish prickly pears. From El Paso the Rio Grande bears off to the south-east, while our course was nearly south, leaving the river some distance to the left.

On the 11th of November our march was resumed, our route leading directly to the sand mountains. Nearly as far as the eye could reach, after we were fairly among them, nothing could be seen but immense piles of light, yellow sand, not a solitary blade of grass relieving the prospect in any direction. The horses sank below their fetlocks at every step, and both men and animals were completely worn out with fatigue before the passage was made across the dreary Saharra. At times our course—for the continual changes

\* The Mexican name of this spring is "Ojo de San Malayuque." How it came by the title of the Diamond of the Desert is more than I can say, but so it was called by our men.



made by the winds forbid the existence of any permanent road—lay along the sides of huge piles of sand; then we were groping our way through dreary ravines at their base, and the next half hour we were climbing steep pyramids which raised their heads high in air. A more desolate scene cannot be imagined; and although the general features of this dreary waste will ever remain the same, the topography will be ever varying. The traveller who passed this desert a month after us, found, instead of the mountains over which we toiled, nothing but gullies. Like an immense panorama, the scene is ever changing, and as the desert is shut in on every side by high mountains of stone and vegetation, these shifting sand hills will remain there until the end of time. The unchanging mountains I have just mentioned in the far distance were clothed with stunted cedars, prickly pears, and a variety of dwarfish shrubs and plants, and were the abodes of the daring Apaches, the fierce grizzly bear, and the black-tailed deer so common in the mountainous region of Northern Mexico.

We had made an early start in the morning, and the distance across the sandy waste was only ten miles; yet it was near night before we had made the tedious passage. Again we encamped with no other water than that we had brought from the Diamond of the Desert, and it was with the greatest difficulty we could find brush and sticks enough to cook our beef; but we had now safely crossed the last desert on our route, were promised an abundance of good water farther onward, and were satisfied.

Near our encampment was a celebrated stone, weighing some two hundred pounds, the history of which is singular enough. Many years ago this stone was found near the Diamond of the Desert, and was the only one within miles of the pool. A band of muleteers commenced lifting it, and finally one or two of them were found strong enough to raise it to a level with, and then to throw it over their heads. By accident the stone first fell towards the city of Mexico; and singularly enough, in the course of time it has come to be superstitiously regarded as a duty among the muleteers who travel this road to facilitate the progress of the stone towards the capital, a distance of some fourteen or fifteen hundred miles! Every muleteer who passes along gives the stone a trial, although scarcely one in fifty is able to throw it over his head, and in no other way is it allowed to be moved. By



this strange system of journeying, the stone has advanced some twelve or fourteen miles on its travel, and this within the last century and a half. The number of travellers upon this road is very great, all the trade between New Mexico and the States of Chihuahua and Sonora being forced to take this route; yet the stone makes remarkably slow progress, the same person not being allowed to throw it over his head more than once. After it gets farther down the country, some ages hence, its transit may be more rapid; but centuries upon centuries will pass away before the wayfarer arrives at its journey's end.

Such was the history of this singular stone as we learned it from Captain Ochoa. It is called *la puerta de piedra*,\* but why it has received this name I know not. Throughout the country, the inhabitants have many strange customs, superstitions, and observances, borrowed from the Indians, and all taking their rise from some circumstance of trifling import; but this idea of starting a stone which few can lift, upon so long a journey and by such ludicrous, not to say preposterous means, is the most singular of all.

By making an early start on the morning of the 12th of November, we were enabled to reach the *Ojo del Lucero*, or *Fountain of the Star*, as it is called, a spring near the roadside, and distant some twenty miles from our encampment of the night before. Our route still led us through a poor and sandy country, the walking extremely tiresome and slow.

Could a correct Daguerreotype view have been taken of us, at any point on the march between El Paso and Chihuahua, I know not whether it would excite more pity or mirth—in fact, I am inclined to believe it would occasion a little of both. The haggard and sickly appearance of the men when first captured, as well as while in the hands of the detestable Salezar, had now given place to fuller cheeks and a more healthy colour—the consequence of a bountiful supply of nutritious food at El Paso, and the comparatively light marches since we had left that place. Still, such a motley collection surely never was seen before—such variety of costume, and such a picturesque, not to say grotesque, appearance as we made would put to the blush and break up a *mardi gras*, rag-fair, fantastical militia, or any other *fancy-dress* pro-

\* Stone door, or door of Stone.



session ever invented. No two were costumed with any attempt at uniformity, and each individual stood forth a distinct and decided character. But few of us had shaved for weeks, and, as a consequence, there was a large and general assortment of unbrushed black, gray, red, and sandy beards, as well as ferocious mustaches and whiskers—enough to rig out an army of Fra Diavolos, Rinaldo Rinaldini, or West India buccaniers. A more brigandish set of Anglo-Saxon faces has never been collected. Then, as to costume, it is utterly impossible to paint the variety our little crowd of one hundred and eighty-one men presented.\* A few shabby-genteel, Jerremy Diddlerish men there were in the party—men who had neither sold nor “swapped” off the clothes they had on when taken—but nine out of ten were, to use a common expression, rigged out almost any and every way. Here would be a fellow trudging along with a pair of ragged, Mexican-made trousers, open from the knee downward, and the sides studded with a profusion of tarnished brass bell buttons. On his head might be stuck the remnant of a straw hat, while a faded Texan dragoon jacket would perhaps complete his outfit. His neighbour, very likely, was arrayed in short buckskin breeches, without stockings, a coarse Mexican woollen shirt, and no hat at all. Then would come a man with a dragoon cap worn jauntily upon his head, while part of a shirt and occasional fragments only of what had once been a pair of military pantaloons, made up the rest of his attire. Hardly one in the crowd had anything like a complete suit even of rags; almost every one was either hatless, coatless, pantaloonly, or shirtless. Neither St. Giles’s nor the Five Points at New-York could furnish such a set of rough, ragged, and I may add rowdish characters in appearance.

Fallstaff’s ragged regiment was well uniformed in comparison with ours; but, singular as it may seem, there could hardly be found a merrier—I might be going too far in

\* The reader may recollect that we set out from San Miguel, one hundred and eighty-seven persons in all. Five were either killed or died before reaching El Paso. At that place a gun-smith, named Neal, was left, under pretence of being too ill to travel. It may be that his services were much wanted by some of the inhabitants and that his sickness “was got up expressly for the occasion.” At all events, I will venture the assertion that the expense of medicine in his case was trifling.



saying a happier—set of fellows in Christendom. Our very looks bred good-humour, for there was something irresistibly ludicrous in the appearance of each man—a quaint solemnity and droll gravity of countenance which would elicit some facetious and good-natured remark from his neighbour. The comic and eccentric were strangely mingled with the tragic and melo-dramatic; but the former preponderated to a degree that completely stifled any pathetic feelings which might otherwise have arisen, and fairly induced us to laugh rather than cry at the forlorn but fantastic figure each one presented in the moving panorama. So completely disguised were we all, that I doubt whether our anxious mothers, even had the liberty of their unfortunate sons depended on the recognition, could have picked us out by the most rigid scrutiny. And even could they, by some well-remembered mark, have detected an errant son, methinks they would have been slow to acknowledge one who had wandered so far from their hearth-stone as to have lost his very identity.

The free lines of Hogarth might have done justice to a scene that was before me for months, but which words are wholly inadequate to describe. Forty times a day I could not resist laughing heartily at forty different persons, and nine times out of ten these same persons would turn the laugh upon myself, and remark that there was nothing particularly prepossessing in my own appearance. And they were right; for almost the heartiest laugh I had was while surveying my own face in a bit of looking-glass. It was the first time I had the pleasure of seeing myself for a month. A luxuriant growth of whiskers and mustaches—I am speaking of quantity, not quality—had sprung up, disguising me thoroughly. I could only see my face in spots, but I could still see enough fully to appreciate the ludicrous, serio-comico figure I presented, and inly I determined to take no offence at any laugh raised, or any remarks made upon my visage or equipment.



## CHAPTER XXI.

**Carazal.—Dr. Whittaker.—Kirker, and the stories told of him.—Captain Spybuck killed by Apaches.—Arrival of the Senora Ochoa.—Laguna Encinillos.—Visitors from Chihuahua.—Hospitality, and the Jesuit's Hospital.—Situation of Chihuahua.—Governor Condé.—The Military of Chihuahua.—Carcel de Ciudad.—The Women of Chihuahua.—The Plaza.—The Cathedral.—The Presidio.—Jesuit's Hospital.—Salon los Distinguidos.—Hidalgo, with a short Account of the first Mexican Revolution, and the Death of that celebrated Leader.**

We passed a singular hot spring, on the 13th of November, our road leading us directly by it. The water boils up from the top of a square mound, some twenty feet high, which, at a short distance, has the appearance of a fortification. That the mound is a natural formation there can be little doubt; but it is in shape square, and has as much precision of angle and regularity of outline as though the hand of man had fashioned it. The top of this mound forms an area of twenty or twenty-five square yards, and is perfectly level, the spring boiling up in the very centre. It is situated in the midst of a desert, bare of all vegetation save a few bushes of the thorn species, and may certainly be considered a great natural curiosity. The water is clear, but warm, and slightly brackish.

A few miles farther on, we encamped by a large and beautiful spring of warm but excellent water. Like the one I have just mentioned, it boils up out of the sand, and in such quantities as to form a brook of no inconsiderable size from the fountain-head. After running some three or four miles this brook empties into, or rather forms, a large pond, or lake. Within a league is another spring of water, which was visited by a small party of our officers, accompanied by Captain Ochoa. The Mexicans say that it possesses medicinal qualities, which are highly efficacious in rheumatism and many chronic diseases. We reached the first-named spring about meridian, and remained all the afternoon,



our men employing their time in bathing, and washing such articles of their scanty wardrobe as might legitimately be termed washable.

The next morning we passed the town of Carazal, leaving it about a mile and a half or two miles on our right. It is situated in a fertile valley at the foot of a mountain, once contained over a thousand inhabitants, and was a place of considerable trade; but the Apaches have completely broken it up by stealing the cattle and crops of the farmers in the vicinity, and destroying any small parties of citizens that unfortunately might be caught too far from its walls. From a point in the road we could plainly see these walls, and also the domes and spires of two or three churches within. We travelled some two miles beyond the town, encamping for the afternoon and night in an old field, and by the side of a swift-running irrigating canal, now rendered comparatively valueless by the inroads of the daring and ever-active Apaches.

While passing Carazal, three or four Mexicans came dashing from the place on horseback, rode up to our party, and inquired if there was a physician among us. Dr. Whitaker, our surgeon, was pointed out, and in company with Van Ness to interpret, he was taken to the house of a woman in the town who was confined to her bed by illness. After he had prescribed some medicines, an excellent dinner was provided for the doctor and Van Ness, and shortly after their return to camp, in the afternoon, a fine fat sheep was sent out to the former, as the fee for his professional services. There are few Mexican physicians except in the large cities of the country, and, so far as I could learn, they have very little need of the services of any, especially on the high table-lands, or *tierras templadas*. Still, American and foreign physicians may be found, scattered all over Mexico, and frequently they accumulate ample fortunes by their practice.

We had been but a short time encamped by the irrigating canal, when we were visited by a half-breed Delaware Indian, a tall, well-made fellow, named Charley Tirrell, who spoke very fair English, although strangely mixed with Spanish and Indian idioms. He had been regularly educated in Indiana, with one or two sisters, so he said; had visited Washington city once or twice, and was well-acquainted with General Dodge and several United States officers. It



required but a very short time for us to ascertain that Charley was extremely fond of dealing in gasconade, and that in his own estimation he was a very important personage; whether this failing was inherent, or he had contracted it by commerce with the Mexicans, who are heavy dealers in that line, I am unable to say. He was accompanied by a quiet-seeming, badly pock-marked Shawnee, and a pert little Mexican officer, who said he had visited the United States, and was incessantly pouring forth a stream of rascally bad English to prove his assertion. Charley informed us that himself and some twelve Shawnees and Delawares, the party under command of a noted chief named Captain Skybuck, had come to this part of Mexico, from the great Western Prairies of the United States, under contract with the government of Chihuahua, to kill the Apaches at so much a head—five dollars, I think, was the price. Some of the Mexicans also told us that a well-known American, named Kirker, had been engaged in the same business, and with a party of his countrymen had been very successful; but it being soon suspected that he was in the practice of bringing in counterfeit scalps—or in other words, that he did not scruple to kill any of the lower order of Mexicans he might meet with, where there was slight chance of being discovered, and pass off their top-knots for those of true Apaches—a stop was put to the game, and afterward, instead of paying him a certain sum for each scalp, he was allowed only one dollar a day for his services. This was the story I heard from the Mexicans, who added, that Kirker immediately gave up the business and retired to Sonora, or the western part of Chihuahua, setting all attempts to arrest him at defiance.

Captain Spybuck and his party, at all events, remained in the service of the government of Chihuahua, receiving for their pay one dollar per diem. He was a brave and noted chief, well known on the Western frontiers of the United States to many of our officers and soldiers. His Mexican expedition had cost him his life; for, but a week previous to our reaching the vicinity of Carazal, he had been killed upon a side of the mountain, near that town, in a desperate encounter with the Apaches. Charley related the particulars of his Captain's death, with not a little feeling, and said that now he was gone, both himself and companions were extremely anxious to return to the United States. He attributed the death of Spybuck to the cowardice of the little



Mexican I have spoken of. The latter commanded a party of his countryman, at the time of his engagement, but retreated precipitately with his men when he ascertained that the Apaches were nearly equal in number, and left his Indian friends to fight it out as best they could. This was not told us in the hearing of the little Mexican, who was a talking, blustering fellow, extremely fond of relating his exploits. I could not but be amused at a remark of Charley—one that plainly shewed he had had much intercourse with the Americans, and well understood their cant phrases. The little Mexican had just finished a recital of some dangerous exploit, of which he had been the hero, when the Delaware remarked aside, that he was “all talk and no cider.”

I was extremely loath, at the time, to credit the Mexican accounts of Kirker and his doings, and have since been informed by Americans, who know him well, that they are destitute of foundation. For many years, Kirker led a wild border life, engaged in continual strife with the hostile Indians of the prairies, and of Mexico, and in all his encounters with them came off victorious. He is now, or was a year since, quietly occupied in overlooking a hacienda, not many days' travel from Chihuahua, ready to repel any attack his old enemies, the Apaches, may make upon him. His superior prowess and great daring may have first embittered the Mexicans against him, for no sooner has any foreigner signalized himself by deeds of noble daring in their cause, than he is looked upon with jealousy and distrust, and the first opportunity is embraced to oust him from the high estate his talents have destined him to fill. This spirit, in all probability, first engendered hostility against Kirker, on the part of the Mexicans, and induced them to fabricate numerous stories of his cruelty and dishonesty.

At Carazal resided, for the time, the Senora Ochoa, wife of our friend, the captain. Just before we left our camp, on the morning of the 15th of November, she arrived with the intention of accompanying her husband to Chihuahua. Although on the cloudy side of thirty, she was still a pretty woman, with large sparkling black eyes, and the winning, easy, and sociable manners which belong to Mexican females of whatever degree. On her arrival she was dressed in a neatly-worked linen chemise and blueish woollen petticoat, a rosary with a small cross around her neck, and wore her



reboso with that grace which is peculiar to the females of her land.

My readers may be a little astonished at the style in which she made her first appearance among us. Her travelling carriage was nothing more or less than a huge Pennsylvania or Conestoga wagon, drawn by four yokes of oxen. This vehicle had found its way from Pittsburgh to St Louis; there had been purchased by traders who had sent it to Santa Fé, and by some strange mutation it had finally reached Carazal and been promoted to the high office of transporting a Mexican officer's lady. Everything was comfortable, however, under the white cotton canopy which served as a top; and I doubt whether the Lord Mayor of London ever felt happier, while shewing himself in his richly-caparisoned coach of State, than did Senora Ochoa while riding in her Conestoga wagon drawn by eight oxen. On her arrival in camp her husband politely invited General McLeod and myself to mess with him and *la senora* as far as Chihuahua, an invitation which we accepted.

Although we did not leave our camp until a late hour on the morning after Charley Tirrell, the Delaware, had visited us, we saw no more of him. After our departure from Carazal I felt annoyed that I had not made an attempt to escape through his agency and by his assistance. I did not place much faith either in his valour or his honesty, although in this I may have wronged him; but I could easily gather, from his conversation, that he was anxious once more to visit his native land, and that nothing but the want of money prevented him. With a small sum in hand, and the promise of a larger on reaching the United States, I have little doubt he would not only have started off on the night he visited our camp, but would have provided horses for the journey. Our march would have been tedious and dangerous, leading directly through a part of the Apache and Camanche country; we should also have been compelled to travel by night, and endure great hardships and sufferings; still, I would have run all risks for the sake of once more gaining that liberty of which I was most unjustly deprived. The opportunity to escape was lost, however, when we left the neighbourhood of Carazal, and unpleasant as was the prospect before me—that of a march of some fifteen hundred miles, and an uncertainty as to what disposition



would be made of me on reaching the city of Mexico—I was obliged to submit.

The night we left Carazal we encamped at another hot well, and on the next afternoon we arrived at a cool spring upon the side of a mountain, at the base of which we halted. On the 18th of November we journeyed along the margin of *Laguna Encinillos*, a lake some twenty miles in length by three or four in width. The country in the vicinity affords most excellent pasturage for cattle and sheep, and several years since there were immense herds of both kept in this vicinity; but the dreaded Apaches have extended their ravages even to the very walls of Chihuahua, and laid the whole country waste. At one time a revenue of several hundred thousand dollars was produced from a single hacienda on the borders of the lake—now the place is desolate, and the owner dare not even visit it without a strong guard. Some of the best land in Mexico lies on the borders of *Laguna Encinillos*, but at present it is entirely useless from the depredations of the Apaches. A few cattle and horses are still pastured in the vicinity; yet where there is one at present, there were one hundred twenty years since.

The Apaches live, for the most part, in the neighbourhood of the chain of mountains lying between New Mexico and the States of Sonora and Chihuahua. They are extremely expert as horsemen, keeping immense droves of those animals, and in using the lance and bow and arrow are said to be surpassingly adroit. It is within a few years only that fire-arms have been introduced among them, and those of so inferior a quality that their former weapons are far more effective. They are a proud, independent, and hardy tribe, but little contaminated by intercourse with the whites, and are said to present the singular anomaly of a tribe of aborigines increasing in numbers and in such wealth as the Indian most covets—horses and arms, trinkets and finery. In their attacks upon the Mexicans they are said to be very daring, coming upon them with the speed of the whirlwind, and making off to their fastnesses and retreats in the mountains before an organized pursuit can be commenced. The Spaniards, when they first subjugated the country, drove this tribe to the mountains and confined them there; but of late years, as I have said they have increased in numbers,



are very systematic in their attacks, and are gradually wresting their lands back from the Mexicans.

On the night of the 19th of November, we arrived at a camp within some five or six miles of Chihuahua. Here we were visited by several gentlemen of the town who had heard of our approach. They spoke to Mr. Navarro very kindly, and said that himself and friends need expect nothing but *hospitality* while in the city. The next night we found ourselves closely confined in the old Jesuits' *Hospital*!

The city of Chihuahua is situated near the southern base of a chain of precipitous mountains, which, at this point, form a kind of crescent, in the curve of which the city stands. As it is approached from the north, the traveller is at a loss how a passage over the rough and steep hills to the south can be made; and even after he has entered the city he is still in doubt. But a ride of an hour brings him to an open defile turning abruptly off, unseen almost until the traveller enters it, and through this passage an excellent road has been cut.

As we approached the city, the mines on the mountain sides could be plainly seen, excavations and smoke marking the points at which the work of digging for silver was then in progress. When within a couple of miles, the inhabitants commenced flocking out—some on foot, others on horseback—while a number of heavy, clumsy-looking, but costly and elaborately-carved coaches, drawn by five or seven mules, with postillions after the old Spanish custom, were on the spot, filled with the ladies of the place. I noticed that two or three of them wore gowns, after the fashion of my own land—the first I had seen in a journey of six hundred miles through the country.

When within one mile of the city, a halt was called, and immediately after, the governor, Garcia Condé, made his appearance, attended by his suite. He is a portly, handsome man, gentlemanly in his manners, and from his complexion appears to be of pure Castilian blood. Dismounting from his horse, he was introduced to and shook hands with General McLeod, Mr. Navarro, and several of the officers, after which the march was resumed.

As we drew closer to the city, it was evident enough that our coming had created an unusual excitement and commotion. The top of the large and magnificent cathedral, the domes of the churches, convents, and other public buildings,



as well as the housetops, were covered with the inhabitants, all anxious to obtain a sight of the much talked-of *Tejanos*. Immediately outside the city the entire military strength of the place, comprising some hundreds of regular and raw troops, was drawn up in lines upon either side of the road. When we were between these lines, another short halt was called, for what purpose I know not, unless it was to allow the miserable burlesques upon soldiers, time to wheel with their faces towards the city. This evolution performed, in a bungling manner, amid the suppressed jeers of our own men, we were commanded to advance in regular order, the Chihuahua troops marching in single file on either side of us to the blowing of trumpets and the beating of drums. In this order we entered the northern or eastern part of the city; but why they marched us in with so much state and ceremony I am utterly at a loss to imagine, unless it was in ambitious emulation of a Roman triumph, which we poor devils were thought worthy to adorn.

While riding along, and wondering at all I saw, I was accosted by a person in the crowd, outside the city, whose face plainly told that he was other than a Mexican. Stealthily, for we were allowed no converse with any but our guard, he asked information of a young man who had started upon the expedition full of health and hope. I told him that the person was dead—had been killed by Indians on the prairie. Farther than this I was not allowed to communicate, the soldier by my side commanding me to silence. Afterward I learned that the individual who addressed me was an American; that the young man of whom he spoke was a nephew; and the startled and desolate look of the man, the feeling with which he ejaculated “dead!” plainly denoted that he was far from anticipating such ill-tidings.

Once inside the city, we found every window, balcony, door, and housetop crowded with men, women, and children. The sides of the streets, too, were lined with a dense throng of half-dressed men and women, the lower orders of the place, and all gazing at us with an intentness as earnest as if we had been so many wild beasts. All was hurry, bustle, and confusion. Children were running about and struggling through the crowd to obtain a look at us, and “Mira! mira! Los Tejanos! los Tejanos!”\* was on every lip.

\* “Look! look! The Texans! the Texans!”



A few steps brought us to the *Carcel de Ciudad*, or city prison, from the close-grated windows of which desperate and villanous faces were peering at us with much apparent satisfaction. Little did I then think that I was yet to be furnished with lodgings in a place even more revolting than this most dreary and dismal prison.

Our march led us on through streets in the direction of the *plaza*, and at every step the crowd seemed to increase and become more dense. The balconies and windows of the better classes were filled with women, their full black eyes beaming upon us with looks of mingled pity and astonishment. They had never before seen a people whom they had been taught to believe worse than the savages themselves—they gazed upon a crowd of unfortunate men, in whose faces they could discover no trace of those evil passions, of that cruelty of disposition and purpose they had supposed us to possess. The commonest observer must have noticed that instinct in children which teaches them, even before they can talk, to read unerringly the countenance of a man or an animal, and to shrink with intuitive fear from an expression sinister or unkind, while they will approach and soon become familiar with any one whose countenance indicates good-nature. That same instinct appeared to govern the females of Mexico, in their conduct towards us—the same pure, gentle, and childlike spirit within them was touched by our distresses, and inspired their soft exclamation of pity—*pobrecitos*—which was murmured in sweet accents from the lips of many a kind-hearted girl of Chihuahua. They saw that we were not the monsters we had been represented to them, that we were at least human, and that we were unfortunate—and had they possessed the power to bid us be free and happy, not a man in the ragged crowd of Texans would have remained an hour in bondage.

We passed through the principal plaza, which was also thronged with gazers. In the centre of the square is a fountain—the celebrated Cathedral of Chihuahua occupying one of the sides, while the shops of the principal foreign and native merchants fill up the other three. The cathedral is a magnificent edifice, as regards both its architecture and adornments. The front is decorated with numerous statues of apostles and saints, nearly or quite as large as life, standing in niches expressly built for their reception, while the doors and windows are richly ornamented with elaborate



sculpture, done in the most costly style. The interior is also said to be very expensively decorated with gold and silver ornaments, paintings, and statuary. The entire cost of all was between a million and a half and two millions of dollars, a monument of the immense sums which the Spaniards even in their more remote provinces, were willing to expend, in order to give full effect to their religion.

On the top of a *fonda*, or hotel, which was kept by an Englishman, we noticed a number of Anglo-Saxons, whose light hair and fair complexions formed a striking contrast to the dark and swarthy faces around them. On arriving at the *Presidio*,\* which was set apart as our prison, we were halted and counted. A short time after, an officer took me to an old establishment of the Jesuits, commenced a great many years since by that ambitious, bold, and enlightened order, but which had never been finished. Here, in a small badly-lighted room, having the words "*Salon los Distinguidos*"† painted over the entrance, I found General McLeod, and Messrs. Navarro, Van Ness, and Falconer, from whom I had been accidentally separated on entering the city, all close prisoners. On the walls of this room were the names of Colonel Cooke and Dr. Brenham, and also that of a Mr. Thurston. The latter had been confined a few days in consequence of a letter of introduction, directed to him, having been found among the papers of the Santa Fé Expedition. It being ascertained, however, upon investigation, that he had no connexion with the Texans, he was released.

The apartment immediately adjoining ours was a dark dungeon, and occasionally we imagined we could hear the clanking of chains which probably confined an unfortunate inmate. The guard who paced up and down in front of our room informed us that an American was the only occupant—his name, or the crime for which he was incarcerated, the sentinel would not disclose.

The building in which we were confined was one of those old Jesuit establishments to be found in every part of America where that order first obtained a footing. That part of it intended for a hospital, prison, and offices, was finished; but the work was stopped before the church was completed. Had the original plan of the Jesuits been carried out, the

\* The garrison or barracks for soldiers.

† Room or apartment for distinguished persons.



church would have been a magnificent edifice, and the building generally would have served as a fortress, impregnable, at least, against the attacks of Indians ; but from some cause the work was suspended before its completion, although immense arches, columns, and a part of the dome of the church are still standing.

The room in which we were confined looked out upon a large *corral*, or yard, in the interior. The rear wall of the church formed one side of this yard, the kitchen and other apartments for servants another side, while the other two were appropriated to quarters for soldiers, rooms for the sick, offices, a place for punishment, and a dungeon. In the yard an Apache woman, with her child, was confined. She was allowed such liberty as she might find in roaming about the building, but was not permitted to go into the streets. She was extremely fat, and appeared to bear her confinement, such as it was, without a murmur.

During the first struggle of the Mexicans for independence, the Spaniards confined no less than thirty-one of their most important revolutionary prisoners in the very room in which we were now placed, among them the celebrated *Hidalgo*, the prime mover and principal leader in the earlier outbreak.

At the commencement of the year 1810, Hidalgo was but the poor and unimportant cura of Dolores, a little town some thirty miles northeast of Guanajuato. From all accounts he was a man of strong mind, and of no inconsiderable reading and information, possessing great powers of endurance combined with resolution and activity, and, in common with the natives of the country at that day, entertained a most cordial hatred for the Spanish-born taskmasters under whose tyrannical yoke they groaned.

The circumstance that every office of honour and emolument in Mexico was filled by a native of Old Spain was enough, of itself, even were the offices held by honourable men, to drive the natives to revolt ; how easy, then, to kindle the flames of revolution, when the band of office-holders, were, for the most part, mere mercenary and broken-down adventurers, unprincipled men, who cheated and defrauded those whom they governed, and whose many acts of insolence and overbearing tyranny tended to render the natives infuriate, against not only the agents themselves, but the parent country that had sent them over ! I do not intend to say that the poorer classes of Mexico are in a much better



situation now than when under the domination of Spain—it appears to be the destiny of the ignorant and moneyless of this unfortunate race to be the prey of the more wealthy and crafty; but the lesson they had received from their neighbours of the United States, co-operating with the excessive and increasing burdens and indignities their mother-country was heaping upon them, prepared the minds of all to echo a *grito*, or cry of revolution, whenever any one was found bold enough to raise it. This man appeared in the person of Don Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the humble but discontented cura of Dolores.

He is said to have received some private insults from the king's officers, which rankled in his bosom; and when to these were joined the common wrongs that were felt by all his countrymen alike, it is not to be wondered at that a man of his characteristic boldness and ambition raised the standard of revolt. His first attempt proved remarkably successful. With but a dozen assistants he seized upon the few Spaniards in Dolores, threw them into prison, and, after dividing their effects equally among his followers, proclaimed war against the common enemies of all, the *Gachupines*, or natives of Old Spain. This was on the 16th of September, 1810.

No sooner had his first success become known, than the entire population of the vicinity flocked to his banner. With a motley, ill-armed crowd, he marched immediately upon San Felipe, a town containing some fifteen thousand inhabitants. Here he was again successful, imprisoning and pillaging all the Spaniards, and dividing the plunder thus obtained among his ragged but enthusiastic adherents. San Miguel el Grande, a town as large as San Felipe, next fell into his hands; the property of all the foreigners was confiscated and divided, after which Hidalgo marched forthwith upon Guanajuato, then containing a population of more than seventy thousand, and immense riches.

In front of this city, and with twenty thousand ragged, undisciplined, and almost unarmed adherents around him, he publicly proclaimed the independence of Mexico, and caused himself to be elected commander-in-chief of the army, with the title of *Captain-general of America*. I cannot dwell long upon particulars: Guanajuato, with all its immense treasures, soon fell into the hands of Hidalgo, the *Gachupines* were indiscriminately slaughtered by his Indian allies, and all their houses razed to the ground. With this additional



success, and with the immense amount of gold and silver, the plunder of Guanajuato gave him, the little breeze of rebellion was now fanned into a perfect hurricane of revolution.

Thousands and tens of thousands now hurried to the standard of the victorious Hidalgo. All had wrongs to redress: the native priest, who under the Spanish rule could never rise above a petty curacy, now had a chance for advancement; the native officers of the army, who were never allowed to fill other than subordinate stations, now saw a bright opening for advancing and signaling themselves; the ladrones, or common thieves, could now reap a rich harvest of plunder; while the poor Indians, who for centuries had groaned silently and patiently under the iron yoke of their conquerors, saw an opportunity for revenge and a chance to regain their long-lost liberty, and with holy zeal joined the common cause against the common tyrants.

Hidalgo remained but ten days at Guanajuato, his motley crowd of adherents, in the mean time, committing the most outrageous excesses. His next move was towards Valladolid, a place which he found evacuated by all the government officers and foreigners. By this time the rabble army he had drawn around him numbered more than fifty thousand men; yet a more undisciplined, ineffective, and ungovernable band were never collected. A large portion of them were drawn from the Indian population, and were armed only with clubs, stones, slings, bows and arrows, lances, axes, and machetes, or heavy swords. It was not until the celebrated patriot general, Morales, then a poor cura like Hidalgo, joined the disorderly throng, that anything like system, either in marching or fighting, was established. Hidalgo had depended only upon numbers, and the blind enthusiasm of his Indians, in encountering the systematic but feeble opposition he had met with only at Guanajuato. From Valladolid, his next movement was towards the city of Mexico, then in the hands of the Spanish viceroy, Venegas.

On the 30th of October Hidalgo defeated the force sent out from the city at the pass of Las Cruces, his ignorant Indians even rushing up to the mouths of the cannon planted to intercept their onward march and endeavouring to stop the death-dealing muzzles with their straw hats! Hundreds of them were mowed down by the cannon, which were well directed by the regular troops under Truxillo and Augustin Iturbide. The latter was at that time a lieutenant in the



**Spanish service**—afterward Emperor of Mexico. These officers were defeated, but defeated only by the number and phrensy of Hidalgo's rabble. The latter immediately advanced within sight of Mexico, and then suddenly retreated with all his host. He well knew that another such victory as that of Las Cruces would ruin him, for his undisciplined Indians had suffered terribly, and had learned the full power of cannon when advantageously posted and well directed.

On the 7th of November following, Hidalgo was defeated, with immense loss, on the plains of Aculco, by General Calleja. We next hear of his entering Valladolid a second time, putting to death many Spaniards. He then marched to Guadalajara, the second city in Mexico, which was at that time in possession of one of his generals, Allende. While there, Hidalgo secretly assassinated no less than seven hundred of the principal Gachupines, and committed many acts that illustrate the bloody manner in which the early revolution was conducted. Nor were the Spaniards guiltless of the most horrible atrocities; for they gave no quarter to such of the unfortunate patriots as fell into their hands.

On the 17th of January, although he now had cannon and had brought a part of his force into something like discipline, Hidalgo was once more defeated by Calleja. This battle was fought at the bridge of Calderon. Hidalgo, with his principal officers and about four thousand men, made good his retreat to Saltillo, in the States of Nueva Leon. Leaving his principal force under Rayon, one of his best generals, Hidalgo hastened towards the United States, in company with Allende and other principal officers, for the purpose of purchasing arms and military stores, and raising efficient recruits to carry on the war against the well-disciplined Spaniards. He got as far as the borders of Texas, with a large sum of money, but was betrayed and captured by Elisondo, one of his former friends and compatriots, marched a prisoner to Chihuahua, and confined in the room where we were now guarded. This was in March, 1811, only six months after he had first raised the *grito* of revolution.

After undergoing a long trial, Hidalgo, with thirty of his officers, was sentenced to death, and is said to have met his fate with great coolness and bravery. Such is a broken and hurried account, gleaned from Ward and other English



writers, of the first revolution in Mexico, and of the short but eventful career of the celebrated Hidalgo, who began it. Some of the sentinels on guard over our little party told a strange tale in relation to the death of Hidalgo and his officers, thirty-one in all—a story undoubtedly destitute of foundation, but which I give to shew the passion of the lower orders in Mexico for the marvellous. As the tale ran, Hidalgo and his officers were ordered to be shot in the yard of the hospital, one each day until they were all executed; but as the month in which the sentence was first passed had but thirty days in it, the Spaniards waited until the ensuing month, which numbered a day for each prisoner. When it came to Hidalgo's turn, the soldiers, in such high respect and reverence was the old cura held by them, could hardly be induced to aim their muskets at him, and many volleys were fired before he received his death-wound. The very spot where he fell was pointed out to us.



## CHAPTER XXII.

The old Jesuits' Hospital of Chihuahua.—American Visitors.—Dr. Jennison.—Singular Trial.—Testimony of General McLeod and Messrs Van Ness and Navarro.—An excellent Dinner from the Senora Magoffin.—“La Luna.”—Armijo's Letter to Garcia Condé.—Movements of Lewis.—Departure from Chihuahua.—El Ojito.—Encounter with American Wagoners.—Arrival at San Pablo.—A Chihuahua Major.—Mexican Horse Jockeys.—Saucillo.—Death of Larrabee.—A young Mexican Musician.—Santa Rosalia.—The Alcade and his Daughter.—Military *versus* Civil Law.

It was about two o'clock on the afternoon of the 21st of November when we were introduced to the Salon los Distinguidos of the Jesuits' Hospital at Chihuahua. At dusk, two American gentlemen made their way, by some means, through the ponderous gate which leads from the street to the interior of the hospital, and came to our door, but were denied admittance by the sentinel. One of the gentlemen, however, while walking up and down in front of our open door, stealthily, and in low and hurried tones, asked me if I could give him the particulars of the death of Fitzgerald, Van Ness, Howard, and Kendall. To be asked the particulars of one's own death! I gave the American my name, pointed to Van Ness, who was sitting on a hospital-cot close by, in such ruddy health that he seemed likely to live seventy years to come, and then told the gentleman that the other victims mentioned as among the killed were both in Chihuahua, at the Presidio, enjoying the full measure of life and strength, and ready to corroborate my statement. I hardly know which were the most astonished—we to hear of our own deaths, or the gentleman to learn from our own lips, that we were still in the land of the living. There was no opportunity, however, for an outward expression of surprise, as the sentinel at the door shewed great uneasiness even at our few hurried questions and answers, not one word of which could we understand. I simply told the American that we had been fortunate enough to escape with our lives thus far, although



nothing but a miracle saved us. Our visitors then left, but not until they had promised to use every endeavour, with Governor Condé, for permission to visit us in our room, and do all in their power to soften the rigours of our confinement.

It is so seldom that a man is called upon to relate the particulars of his own death, that few of my readers can know what feelings the inquiry will excite. Our own were of a nature exceedingly mixed. There was something pleasant, to be sure, in the fact that we were able to answer all anxious inquiries in person; but it was not without a slight misgiving as to our chances in perspective that we hastily recounted the particulars of our recent fortunate escape from a death that seemed almost inevitable.

On the following day we learned the name of the gentleman who had questioned us, and the reasons which had induced him to suppose us dead. It seems that Colonel Cooke and Dr. Breuhain had reported that we were shot at San Miguel, with Howland and his unfortunate companions, believing such to be the case from the statements made to them while in New Mexico, and from the fact that we were not seen by any of them nor marched in their company towards the capital. The name of the gentleman who first visited us at the hospital was Dr. Jennison, a native of New-England, but at that time the principal conductor of the mint at Chihuahua. He has since paid the debt of nature; but the memory of his courteous and gentlemanly manners, and of his kindness and exceeding liberality in furnishing the prisoners with shoes and other articles of which they stood in utmost need, still lives in the hearts of those he befriended.

Our visitors had scarcely left us before clean mattresses and sheets were brought to our room, and comfortable beds made, after which we passed a quiet night in sleep. The next morning an English gentleman sent us in a sumptuous breakfast—the first really substantial meal I had seen since I left the United States. It consisted of plain beefsteak, tender and of delicious flavour, baked Irish potatoes and most excellent bread, with a generous supply of coffee. The Mexican servant who brought it informed us that the gentleman who had called upon us the previous evening would endeavour to see and converse with us during the day; and one of them, passing our door in the course of the morning, said that as soon as our depositions were taken in relation to the



prisoner confined next door, the foreigners would all be permitted to visit us. We were still left in profound ignorance as to the name of the unfortunate man, or the nature of the charge against him; but the whole story was soon to be told.

Although there was no entrance to the interior of the square, on one side of which we were confined, save through a large archway from the street, we were not allowed even to cross this yard unaccompanied by one of the sentinels. While passing a gateway near the entrance to the kitchen, a dragoon trailing close at my heels, I encountered, face to face, the prisoner confined in the dungeon adjoining our apartment. He was dressed in a green blanket coat, with black collar and cuffs, had large, black whiskers, and wore his hair extremely long, and although his complexion at the time appeared dark, his face was extremely pale. I was about to accost him, when he gave me a look that appeared to be so full of mingled scorn, hatred and enmity, that I was for a moment chilled into silence. I may have mistaken its expression, or he might deem it prudent to act thus coldly and strangely in the presence of Mexican witnesses; but at the time I felt confident that he considered himself indebted to us for his sufferings and the loss of his liberty—I thought there was no mistaking that black scowl he gave me as I passed him.

Ignorant alike of his name, business, and the circumstances of his arrest, and conscious of my own innocence in the matter, I had no sooner passed him than I was extremely anxious to come to some explanation; but my watchful guard would allow no communication, and I was forced onward without a chance to justify myself from the erroneous impressions under which I thought he must be labouring. Two soldiers accompanied the prisoner, and he was shortly locked up in his gloomy cell.

This accidental meeting, which troubled me not a little, was early in the morning. Towards noon, the mystery which veiled our neighbour was dispelled. The secretary of Governor Condé, accompanied by another officer of state and a Mexican lawyer who understood a little English, arrived at our quarters to take depositions in relation to the case of Captain Dryden, which turned out to be the name of the prisoner. It seems that he had been mentioned in some of the papers of the Texan Commissioners as a man whom they



might consult on reaching New Mexico. When the expedition arrived in the neighbourhood of Santa Fé, Captain D. was residing in Chihuahua. On receiving the intelligence of his name being found among the Texan papers, the authorities caused him to be arrested and confined in chains in the strongest dungeon of the place.

On the arrival of the persons appointed to take our depositions, General McLeod, Messrs. Van Ness, Falconer, and myself were called from the room, and Mr. Navarro was examined alone. Afterward General McLeod was taken into the room and questioned in private, the Mexican officers taking every precaution to prevent anything like collusion. Mr. Van Ness was next examined, and the testimony of all taken down in writing—as Mr. Falconer and myself knew nothing of the prisoner, we were not examined. The testimony of all went to shew that they knew nothing of Mr. Dryden—that his name might have appeared among the papers, but that it was probably without his consent—at all events, he was in no way identified with the Santa Fé Expedition, so far as they were concerned. The effect of this testimony was to procure the release of the prisoner from chains, to give him a greater degree of personal liberty, and his American friends were afterwards allowed to converse with him. Some twelve months afterwards, as I have been pleased to learn, Captain Dryden was released from confinement through the intervention of our minister at Mexico, General Waddy Thompson.

Scarcely had the officers of state left our room, before an excellent dinner, comprising a great variety of Mexican dishes, with two bottles of Champagne, was sent to us by the Senora Magoffin, wife of the merchant who had furnished us with the coffee and other luxuries at San Miguel, and whom we had afterward passed on the road to El Paso. We had not the pleasure of seeing the senora, but she was represented to us as a kind hearted, affable, and exceedingly well informed woman, a Mexican by birth. Mr. Navarro was acquainted with her, she having lived at San Antonio de Bexar prior to the Texan Revolution, and, I believe, he received permission to call upon her while we were in Chihuahua. Two or three of her children, fine, intelligent boys, called upon us daily at meal times, for their mother furnished us regularly with three meals a day, having obtained permission from the governor to that effect.



After dinner, we were visited by nearly all the Americans and foreigners in the place, the governor having no objection to their calling upon us after the testimony in relation to Captain Dryden had been taken. They offered us every attention and kindness, and supplied us with books and writing materials, as well as clean clothing. From this place I wrote letters to Mr. Ellis, then our minister at Mexico, and my friends in United States. A part of these letters only reached their destinations; but as the larger portion of them were written with the belief that they might possibly fall into the hands of the Mexicans, I was guarded in my language, and cared but little whether they ever got safe through or not.

Among other papers brought to our room by the foreigners was a copy of *La Luna*, a small weekly sheet published at Chihuahua. It contained a letter from Armijo to Governor Condé, giving him the number and rank of the prisoners. The last sentence of this letter was in substance as follows: "You will please guard with especial care Senors Navarro, McLeod, Cooke, Breunham, and Kendall, on account of their superior intelligence, standing, and influence." Here I was expressly implicated as one of the leaders of the expedition, and for this I at once supposed that I was indebted to the traitor Lewis. Armijo, as I well knew, contemplated giving me my liberty at San Miguel—the reasons for his not doing so were obvious. Lewis was probably fearful that I should be in his way at Santa Fé, and accordingly made such statements to Armijo as induced him to send me to Mexico as a prisoner of importance. It had the effect of ensuring me better treatment upon the road, if nothing else; for the Mexicans invariably treat their more important prisoners with the greater deference.

The same paper contained several stirring appeals, both in prose and verse, to the known patriotism and valour of the citizens of Chihuahua! An immediate invasion of Texas was urged, with all the force that can be infused through the Spanish language into a war proclamation. To drive the usurping Texans from a soil which did not belong to them, to sweep them from the face of the earth as with a whirlwind, was set down as the easiest thing imaginable, especially when the oft tried and impetuous bravery of the Chihuahua soldiers was brought to bear upon them. When it is considered that the inhabitants of that city are



really prisoners within their own walls, 'hardly daring to venture outside on account of the hordes of Apache and Camanche warriors continually prowling in their vicinity, the idea of an invasion of Texas from that quarter is somewhat ludicrous. But the editor had seen evidences that the Texans were not absolutely invincible; he had seen some three hundred half-starved prisoners from that country marched by his doors, and his long pent up and furious wrath found vent, on paper, in a laughable tissue of bombast and gasconade. The same paper, too, contained a stirring appeal from some poetical correspondent to a favorite grey horse, imploring the said horse to start immediately with him to the bloodstained prairies of Texas, and when there to ride down, run over, and trample under foot the Texan heretics until not even one was left. Of the two, I am strongly inclined to believe that the animal was much more ready to undertake the perilous journey than the man.

From conversations I have had with several American merchants, who are engaged in the Santa Fé and Chihuahua trade, and who visited the United States during the summer of 1843, I have learned the movements of Lewis since the capture of the expedition. On his arrival at Santa Fé the foreigners treated him with much coolness and distrust, convinced that he had acted badly, although not aware of the extent of his treachery. No positive insults were offered him, but Lewis was soon led to imagine that his countrymen suspected him of some agency in inducing Colonel Cooke to surrender, and with this belief he quietly and secretly started for Chihuahua. This city, in which he had lived several years, he entered in the night, and at once presented himself to one of his former intimate friends and associates. The meeting, so far as the latter was concerned, was far from cordial—the whilom friend of the traitor had heard of his perfidy, and at once advised him to leave Chihuahua if he would escape the just indignation of the foreign population.

But Lewis could not or would not believe that a mark had thus been set upon him, and accordingly, on the following morning, openly walked the streets, apparently resolved to retreat no farther, but brave public opinion on the spot. While a clerk in the place he had gained the good will and esteem of the residents, many of whom were still there, and



when in company, with the brave but unfortunate Howland, he had left to join the revolutionists in Texas, somewhere about the year 1835, no one bore a better name or reputation; now, the tables were turned. His former associates treated him coldly and with suspicion, either cutting him directly or plainly manifesting that all their former confidence and friendship were lost. Lewis saw and felt this, and that very evening was on the road to the Pacific.

His bad name, however, had travelled faster than himself, for, arrived at Guaymas, he found the same coldness and distrust on the part of the foreign residents—the mark, even here, was upon him. His advances were repulsed, his society avoided, and as if to flee from himself he embarked for the Sandwich Islands. From thence, under an assumed name, he is known to have sailed for Valparaiso, or some other port on the South American coast, and since then nothing farther has been heard from him.

Judging from his previous conduct, I cannot believe that Lewis was aware of the enormity of his offence until he saw the disposition made of Colonel Cooke and his former friends and associates by Armijo. He did not lack good sense, but he lacked resolution—a fact which the quick eye of Armijo at once saw, and which he immediately turned to his own advantage. In Lewis he found an instrument upon whose fears he could play, and by threats probably converted him into a tool wherewith to work his treacherous and cowardly schemes. On awaking to a full realization of the extent of his crime, the same lack of resolution prevented Lewis from seeking to undo the black web of treachery in which he was entangled, but rather induced him to the commission of farther acts of a like nature, and of almost equal atrocity. How often does the heedless first offence lead to the commission of well matured and more heinous crimes—crimes at the bare thought of which the perpetrator would at first revolt with horror, but which he soon deems necessary to cover the original sin, and fortify his present precarious position. So it is in nine cases out of ten, so it was with Lewis; but I must leave this dark subject, and return to the *Salons los Distinguidos*.

On the evening of the 26th of November, we were visited by a lively, chattering little French woman, who came accompanied by a pretty and intelligent Mexican girl, a native of the place, and belonging to one of the first families.



The former was some twenty-eight or thirty years of age, not handsome, but extremely *naïve* and entertaining, and speaking four or five languages with much fluency.

Her visit lasted nearly an hour, during which she ran on with the greatest volubility—evincing no little emotion at the recital of our sufferings, and then laughing merrily as some ludicrous circumstance would be related. She gave us a short history of herself—a history which shewed that her life had been eventful. She had travelled the world over, and finally had settled down at the most out-of-the-way place, Chihuahua. There she was assisting her husband, a German druggist, in his shop, and teaching music and the languages to the rising generation of her own sex. She talked to us and appeared to look upon us as her countrymen, and this is the light in which we were held by all the foreigners whom we encountered in Mexico. The kindest feelings were manifested towards us by the English, Irish, and Scotch, and also by the French and Germans we met on our sorrowful journey. They manifested the liveliest emotions of pity at our unfortunate situation, and extended to us a sympathy that appeared to spring from genuine fraternal feelings.

Our departure from Chihuahua was fixed for the next day after the interview with the little French woman, a fact we had no sooner learned than we set about making preparations for the long journey. A young merchant from Massachusetts offered me every assistance in the way of money, clothing, or necessaries. Of the former I had a sufficiency; but not wishing to expend it I accepted his kind offer so far as to purchase some clothing, chocolate, *piloncillos*,\* and other little luxuries for the road, for which I gave him drafts. Doctor Jennison gave each of the Texans a pair of shoes and a tin cup, and in addition to this a large supply of clothing and blankets was purchased of an American merchant for the use of the Texan soldiers, beside several mules for the officers to ride. For these drafts on the Texan government were given by General McLeod and Mr. Navarro. The situation of all the prisoners was materially improved by this seasonable supply, and the long journey to Mexico still before us was robbed of

\* The *piloncillo* is a small loaf of coarse brown sugar, manufactured in the middle districts of Mexico, weighing some pound and a half. I think I have given the word the correct spelling.



many of its terrors by the fact, that we were now in a condition better to encounter its hardships.

After partaking of an excellent dinner on the 27th of November, provided as usual by Mrs. Magoffin, we took our leave of Chihuahua and our kind friends. I cannot depart from this city, however, without relating one little circumstance which did not help me forward much in the estimation of the more ignorant among the native inhabitants. Some old meddling busybody of a Mexican, whose name I have now forgotten, got up a small breeze of excitement by saying that in the paper I published at New Orleans I had called the great Mexican people a nation of brutes—quadrupeds was the term he used. I had no recollection, at the time, of ever having applied any such term to the people of Mexico, but thought that if ever the opportunity occurred, I most certainly should, at least to a portion of them. I should be loath to insult the larger part of the brute creation by comparing them with the inhabitants of New Mexico, always making a few honourable exceptions. The hyenas, wolves, and jackals can find innumerable kindred spirits on two legs north of El Paso del Norte, and many of them even south of that place. But to return to our departure from Chihuahua.

Mr. Navarro had a brother-in-law, a colonel in the Mexican service, who had sent an order to a friend in Chihuahua to furnish him with a carriage and a pair of mules. A Mexican officer had informed our little party that we were to be furnished with transportation as far as Cerro Gordo, a small town some two hundred miles distant; but on starting we found that he had disappointed us, and that we were again to proceed on foot. The horse furnished me by the kind-hearted cura of El Paso was completely worn down and unable to travel, and I determined to purchase another if possible.

The entire population of the place turned out to see us off, the streets on both sides being lined, as usual, with the lower orders of men, women, and children. The foreigners, too, rode out some little distance, and I had an opportunity of seeing nearly every one of them, with the exception of the gentleman who had furnished me with clothing. We were to proceed but a few miles the first evening; I therefore asked one of the Americans to inform my friend in the city that I was in want of a horse, saddle, and bridle, and at



the same time desire him to send them out early the next morning. This he promised to do, and then bade us farewell.

At dark we encamped by the roadside, and at a place where there was neither wood nor water. The night was extremely raw and cold, and we were again compelled to take lodgings upon the ground; but as we were now well provided with clothing and blankets, our situation was far more comfortable than even between El Paso and Chihuahua.

Early the next morning, a servant arrived from my friend in town, bringing me a strong and very serviceable Mexican pony. He was wild and frisky as a mustang at my first approach, performed a variety of unseemly antics, and for some time manifested a set determination not to allow me the innocent little familiarity of bestriding him. A ragged, grim-visaged Mexican, with an expression of countenance sinister enough to frighten any well-bred animal from his propriety, would walk directly up to and mount him without the least trouble; but the moment I undertook such a liberty he would sheer off, jump and kick about "like mad," and keep such distance between us as a twenty-foot rope would admit. At one time he wound me up in the rope, threw me down, and came near injuring me seriously; and it was not until I had made repeated efforts that I succeeded in reaching the saddle. Once there, I permitted him to shew off his eccentricities *ad libitum*; but after snorting, shying, rearing, pitching, dancing, and capering about for some five minutes, and whirling in circles, much to the amusement of a score of half-clad Mexicans, he finally cooled down into an easy, mincing pace, and I ever after found him a very well-behaved and extremely serviceable animal. I have just remarked that the Mexicans were amused on my first effecting a lodgment upon the back of the horse. In truth, it was my first appearance in one of their saddles, and my horsemanship probably partook more of the awkward than the graceful on the occasion. At all events, I did not feel that perfect security which is agreeable as I mounted upon a saddle of a shape I was entirely unused to, with a horse under it displaying a variety of anything but gentle antics and curvettings. I attempted to act with perfect indifference, but I am far from denying that I had serious misgivings all the while, lest by some extra feat of



the horse, I should be compelled to leave him in that unceremonious manner which is generally styled, among jockeys, "being thrown."

To one unaccustomed to the Mexican saddle it is extremely awkward, and far from being easy at first; but when once habituated to its use, it is almost invariably preferred to those of English or American manufacture. The rider has more command over himself, sits easier and steadier, and is far less liable to be thrown. The one I purchased with the horse, at Chihuahua, I rode to within twelve miles of the city of Mexico, and on afterward mounting an English saddle I felt unsteady, and like being thrown from it every moment. For the horse and saddle I gave a draft, written upon a piece of paper resting on my hat, and oddly enough, this draft, with others I gave the same person while in Chihuahua, reached the city of New-Orleans on the very day I myself arrived: while I travelled by way of the city of Mexico, subject to slight detention upon the road, the draft came by way of Santa Fé, the immense Western Prairies, and St. Louis—in all a distance of nearly four thousand miles.

On the night of the 28th of November, and an extremely cold night it was, we reached El Ojito, a poor hacienda where we could obtain no accommodations in-doors. We passed three or four wagons during the day, loaded with piloncillos and dry goods, on the way from Parras to Chihuahua. The drivers of these wagons were Americans, stalwart and robust men, who had strayed thus far by way of Santa Fé. They informed us that Colonel Cooke's party were some three weeks in advance of us, and taking the road towards Durango; well treated on the road, and generally in good health. They manifested no little astonishment that so large a party of Americans had been taken prisoners by a population so contemptible as that of New Mexico; but when we informed them of the treachery of Lewis, and our previous starvation and sufferings, they appeared better to understand the matter. After a conversation of some ten minutes with these men, we were forced to pursue our journey.

The night of the 29th of November we passed at another small and poor rancho, the name of which I have forgotten. On the afternoon of the next day we reached the village of San Pablo. The inhabitants, numbering



some ten or twelve hundred, all flocked out to see us on our approach, for the officer who now had charge of us, a dapper little major of the redoubtable Chihuahua militia, had heralded our approach by the clangour of two badly-blown trumpets. He was a proud and ignorant fellow, extremely fond of display, and I have no doubt honestly thought himself a very great man. Our old friend Ochoa was still with us, however, acting as a man-of-all-work, and from him we invariably received every kindness and attention. I have entirely forgotten the little major's name, else I might make farther mention of him, and the many annoyances we were subjected to while under his charge.\*

On one side of the principal plazo of San Pablo, which was entered through a large and heavy gate, Ochoa had provided rooms for the principal officers and merchants, while the men were compelled to occupy the centre of the square, with no shelter from the weather. This was the case on nearly the entire march, the men sleeping in the open air, except in the large cities, where convents or other spacious buildings could be obtained for their reception. Generally, I am inclined to think, the Texan soldiers had the best of it. They suffered occasionally from the cold ;

\* This petty little tyrant frequently beat his own men most unmercifully with the flat of his sword, and almost invariably without provocation. The half-clad, sandalled, and ill-fed wretches stood in continual fear of him, while from Ochoa they experienced the kindest treatment and all becoming respect. I never saw the latter strike but one man, a New Mexican horse-thief, who, doubtless, well deserved the severe castigation he received. While journeying between El Paso and Chihuahua, we met a party of New Mexican traders on their way from Sonora to Santa Fé. One of them was mounted upon a miserable hack, raw-boned and rough-coated, and to give the horse an additional forlorn appearance, his mane and tail had been close shaved. The unhealed mark of a fresh brand was also seen upon the animal—a mark which not one of us would have noticed, but which the eagle eye of Ochoa at once detected. The fellow was commanded to halt, half a minute's examination convincing our captain that the fresh brand had been placed over a former mark. Another minute was sufficient to assure Ochoa that the horse had been stolen, and that he was really the property of the government in disguise. The thief was instantly dragged from the animal, and the next moment a shower of blows from Ochoa's sword was falling upon his back. With perfect indifference did we look upon this scene, and I doubt whether a single Texan prisoner would have shed a tear had the New Mexican horse-thief received a blow at every step between El Paso and Santa Fé.



but nine times out of ten the officers found their rooms overrun with fleas and chinchas, besides innumerable other vermin, the names of which I do not care to mention. Little did I think, on first leaving the United States, that my vestments were ever to afford harbour and shelter for swarms of insects of the most loathsome description; but imprisonment and misfortune bring strange companionships. They enabled me to get a practical knowledge upon entomological subjects of which before I did not understand even the theory.

While at San Pablo, Mr. Falconer and others expressed a wish to purchase horses for the journey. But a few minutes elapsed before several nags were paraded in the square, their Mexican riders mounting, spurring, and shewing them off in every pace and to every possible advantage. At this game the Mexican jockey is far more expert than his brother of the same calling even in Yorkshire or Yankeeland. Mr. Falconer, after having tried several, finally made choice, as was his wont in the selection of horseflesh, of a discreet and very well-behaved animal, for which, with a saddle and bridle, he paid twenty four dollars. The nag was considerably advanced in years, set in his ways withal, and notable for taking a jog to suit his own convenience, regardless alike of whip and spur and other incentives to rapid locomotion; but then he was fat and strong, and as his purchaser chose him rather for use and comfort than show or fancy, he made an excellent bargain. Two or three other ponies were purchased at the same time, and at prices varying from ten to fifteen dollars each, the purchasers having obtained small loans of money while at Chihuahua.

Leaving San Pablo early on the morning of the 1st of December, we were enabled to reach Saucillo the same night, although the distance was more than ten leagues. The only business carried on at Saucillo is the manufacture of lead, there being a mine of that mineral in the immediate vicinity. There are but few inhabitants, and they are wretchedly poor and ignorant.

At this place the plan of an escape was agitated by a number of the bravest spirits among our officers and men, and although opposed by others, was finally determined upon. The plan was to seize upon the guard the next morning, shortly after starting, disarm them at once, and then make a forced march to the Rio Grande. It failed



from a want of unanimity, and from the impossibility of inducing every person to keep the station assigned him. Our guard usually marched on either side of us, and although they were tolerably well armed, we outnumbered them. We could have seized upon and disarmed them with the greatest ease, and probably not a man would have been killed on either side in the scuffle; but it is extremely problematical whether any of the Texans would ever have reached home had the plan been carried out. Between us and the Rio Grande ran a ridge of bold, steep, and in many places impassable mountains; the plains were covered with thick and scraggy thornbushes, rendering the travel extremely slow and painful at every step; the exact route and distance were unknown to any one, and there was no certainty that water or provisions could be found on the route. I have enumerated but few of the difficulties to be encountered, and from what I have since learned of the country between our road and the Rio Grande, by the route we should have taken, I am led to believe that hardly a man would have got through alive.

Mr. Navarro opposed the scheme, and mainly by reason of his opposition it fell through. He was so lame that he could neither walk nor ride on horseback, and it was utterly impossible to go with his carriage across the rough and broken mountains. His own destruction would have been inevitable, and this he told the men. He farther stated that not a man, with the single exception of himself, would be detained six months in Mexico; that we should endanger the safety of Colonel Cooke's party by an escape, and be certain to bring about his own death, as the exasperated Mexicans would shoot him on the spot. Few of our men believed his words; but as matters have since turned out, the old gentleman spoke with a spirit of prophecy—he alone has been kept in prison at the city of Mexico, while all the others have been liberated.\*

\* The attempt since made by the prisoners captured at Mier, in which both Brenham and Fitzgerald were killed, proves, beyond doubt, that we must either have been all retaken or have starved to death. The Mier prisoners were successful in securing all the arms of their guard after a short struggle, and this, too, at a point much nearer and more accessible to the Rio Grande than ours at the time of our contemplated escape. The former were finally retaken, half-starved, in the mountains, and what were left after a barbarous decimation were marched to the city of Mexico, ironed, and compelled to work in the streets.



During the night we spent at Saucillo a man named Larrabee died in one of the carts. He was the same person whom Major Howard had pursued upon the prairies, mistaking him for an Indian, and it was said that poor L. never got over the fright of that singular chase. When first discovered in the morning, the body of the man was perfectly cold; but Captain Ochoa asked Dr. Whittaker, our surgeon, to examine him, and see if he was "*dead enough to bury!*" Singular as was this expression, I believe I have given the captain's own words. He had heard of the horrible barbarities practised between San Miguel and El Paso—knew that the ears of some of our unfortunate comrades were cut off by Salezar before they were yet dead, and that their bodies were thrown by the roadside unburied, to be devoured by wolves—he had heard all this, and the kind-hearted man was anxious to pay every respect now that one of the prisoners had died while he had charge of us. Poor Larrabee was buried by the roadside at Saucillo, and sorrowful enough were the faces of those present at his funeral; but the eyes of kindred, of those who would have bedewed his grave with tears, were far from the scene.

After a tedious day's march, we reached, just at night, a corn-field near La Cruz, and here encamped. During the evening we were visited by a young lad from a rancho close by, who brought with him a harp of his own manufacture. He had learned to play upon this instrument without a teacher, and although he could not be more than ten or twelve years of age, his execution was really good, and his style that of a master. The Mexicans generally are extremely fond of music, and great numbers of the men can strum the mandolin, a species of small guitar, and give the rude airs of the country with much skill and effect. They play from the ear alone—not one in a hundred of them, in all probability, could tell a note of music from the hieroglyphics on some of the old ruins of his country.

About noon, on the 3d of December, we arrived at Santa Rosalia, a pleasant town situated upon a pure, swift-running stream of water. As was universally the custom, the entire population—men, women, and children—assembled in the streets through which we passed, and gathered in great numbers in the plaza where we were ordered to encamp. We had scarcely halted, before the alcalde arrived and invited our little party of officers and merchants to a dinner



at his own house. He was evidently a poor man, and his dinner was far from being as sumptuous as many I have seen; but we were waited upon by his two daughters, one of whom was a blooming, blushing, bouncing girl of sixteen, and *tortillas* and *frijoles* held out until all of us were satisfied.

Next morning, and just as I had saddled my horse, a couple of Mexicans stepped forward and claimed him as belonging to them. They said that he had been stolen some two months before, and after proving property, were about taking him off without paying me any of the charges or expenses I had been at on his account. I appealed to Captain Ochoa, and told him the circumstances of my purchasing the horse of an American friend at Chihuahua. That the animal belonged to the two men who claimed him there was not the least doubt—they pointed out brands, marks, and numbers, and proved the fact of his having been stolen, by a statement under the *alcalde's* own hand and seal—but Captain Ochoa decided the case in my favour, told me to mount him, and turning to his owners, gave them leave to whistle for their property, or look to the person who had sold him to me. I am far from justifying the decision of Captain Ochoa, although I profited by it; I only mention the circumstance to show that the military power in Mexico tramples upon the civil—that there, might makes right.

I was extremely fearful that the fellows would follow us and steal back their property; but Captain Ochoa placed a special sentinel over the horse at night—had it not been for this watchfulness, I should probably have found myself on foot the next morning.

By making an early start from Santa Rosalia on the 4th of December we were enabled to reach a small rancho before nightfall, encamping in the open field near the roadside, for we had no desire to enter the miserable adobe huts of the inhabitants. Immediately in the rear of the place stood four or five crosses, new and recently put up, marking the places where that number of the little population had been killed by the dreaded Apaches some week or two before.

The traveller on the great thoroughfare between Santa Fé and the city of Mexico, in fact on every road throughout the country, meets numbers of these rude wooden crosses on every day's journey. Whenever a man is murdered, his



friends erect a cross, and frequently the name of the murdered person is cut with a knife upon the transverse part, together with his age, the date of his death, and any little circumstance of note attending it. Around the foot is a heap of small stones, brought thither by friends; and the importance of the murdered person, as well as the number of prayers which have been said for his repose, may be learned by the size of the pile. Many stories of romantic interest were told us, by our gossiping guard, of these roadside graves and their occupants, but I have now forgotten them. Should the traveller treasure up all the strange tales, wild legends, and superstitious traditions related to him in Mexico, he would soon have his head full. For the most part they are entirely destitute of foundation, for the Mexicans have very fertile imaginations, and are sadly addicted to dealing in the marvellous and romantic.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

Arrival at Guajuquilla.—A little Mexican Lawyer.—Rejoicing at Guajuquilla.—Montezuma's Brother.—Arrival at El Rio Florido.—General Pike.—The Hacienda of La Noria.—Musical Soirée and Dancing.—Arrival at Cerro Gordo, in the State of Durango.—A Fandango and Cock-fight.—Departure from Cerro Gordo.—Honorable Conduct of Ochoa.—Condition of the Peons, or Working Classes of Mexico.

The night of the 6th of December was passed, agreeably enough, by a majority of the prisoners, at the town of Guajuquilla, a place of no inconsiderable note in this section of Mexico—but a small party of us were made extremely unhappy by the misnamed hospitality of a whipper-snapper of a lawyer. When within five miles of Guajuquilla, this little fellow rode up from a rancho near the roadside, and after selecting General McLeod, Messrs. Navarro, Falconer, Van Ness, and myself as his victims, invited us, with much importance, to his dwelling close by, at the same time promising the little major who had charge of us that he would be responsible for our appearance on the following morning. There was something haughty and repulsive in the aspect of the man, and I should have preferred taking the chances of procuring a good dinner and lodging in Guajuquilla; but we were all obliged to accept his proffered hospitality, and I have little doubt the fellow thought he was doing us great honour and conferring a high favour by inviting us to his house. Be this as it may, he made us very uncomfortable.

At home, we found him a vain, pompous, talkative braggadocio, with a very limited education, and not the least real knowledge of the world. He did not think so himself, of course; but he thoroughly convinced us of the fact by his desperate endeavours to elevate himself in our opinions. He recounted the different offices he had held—said that at one particular time he was a colonel of the militia, an alcalde, a



lawyer, and a judge—and that he had put seven men in the stocks in one single day, for daring to disobey his orders. As he thus ran on, he raised himself on tiptoe at every fresh demonstration of his own importance and power, and being naturally but about four feet and a half in height, seemed endeavouring to elevate himself to the ordinary standard of humanity. He gave us a miserable dinner, worse chocolate in the evening, a shuck bed to sleep upon, a breakfast in the morning which would have been spurned by a dyspeptic Grahamite, and then had the cool impudence to ask us if we had ever been treated so well before, and hoped that we might recollect him. I can assure him that he has not been forgotten. In almost every instance where we were invited to the houses of the Mexicans of the highest order, we found them gentlemanly in their deportment and extremely good livers—the little coxcomb I have just mentioned was a signal exception.

After our scanty breakfast he accompanied us into the town, where we found that our companions had passed a very agreeable night. They had been extremely well lodged, and had been invited to a fandango attended by all the beauty of the town. This incensed us more than ever against our ignorant, conceited, and mean-spirited host, but there was no help for it.

Shortly after the arrival of our little party in Guajuaquilla, the march was resumed. The journey that day was short, as we had reached, before noon, a noted stopping-place, where there was a spring in a grove of cotton-wood trees. After sundown it was evident enough that there was a great rejoicing in the town, where our main body had slept the night before. Rockets were seen shooting in the air, the report of muskets was heard, and everything denoted that the appearance of such a body of Texan prisoners was enough to arouse the patriotism of the inhabitants, and induce them to celebrate the unusual occurrence by fireworks and other demonstrations. The hand, too, of the little lawyer who had annoyed us the night before, was plainly to be seen in this outpouring of the public feeling; and I have little doubt he was very officious among squibs, India crackers, Chinese wheels, blue fires, and sky-rockets. While I was enjoying what he called his hospitality, he gave me his name. I did not think, at the time, that I should ever forget it; but it has entirely escaped my memory. I



hope he will excuse me for not giving it in full, more particularly when he is informed that it is far from being an intentional slight on my part.

In a party so large as ours, numbering some hundred and seventy, and composed of persons from almost every Anglo-Saxon settlement under the sun, as a matter of course there were many originals—fellows up to all sorts of mad pranks, and ever ready to play off their tricks when opportunities occurred. Conspicuous among them was Captain H., a man with great powers of imitation, an inexhaustible fund of humour, and a dry manner of telling stories and playing off his practical jokes. Poor fellow! he is now dead; but the memory of his queer conceits still lives.

Among us, at the time, was a good-natured, easy, quiet sort of personage from the Western country, whom I shall call D. While nearly every one of the prisoners had picked up Spanish enough to “get-along,” as the saying is, D. never could learn the name even of the commonest utensil or article of food, and the same may be also said of Captain H. The latter, however, in mere fun, had induced D. to believe that he spoke the purest Castilian, and was always ready to interpret everything for him at a moment’s notice. As a consequence, the most ludicrous scenes were of almost daily occurrence, and the translations of Captain H., while interpreting for his friend, would often drive from our minds the thousand melancholy reflections our forlorn situation could not but suggest. One or two little circumstances I will relate, which created great mirth at the time.

We were encamped in the plaza of a small town, the name of which I have forgotten, when a poor woman approached D. with two loaves of bread to sell. She had a reboso on her head, one end of which, drawn over her left shoulder, fell down in front. An infant, not more than three months old, was plainly seen resting upon her left arm, while the hand which held the bread was entirely concealed under the reboso. Addressing D. in Spanish, she asked him if he wished to purchase her bread.

“What does she want?” said D., turning to Captain H.

The latter knew just as little of the wishes of the woman as the former; but his ready wit at once saw that fun could be extracted from the circumstance. Mixing up, therefore, some half dozen unintelligible words—a speech of which D. knew as little as himself, and of which the poor woman was



as ignorant as either—he mumbled them over as though addressing the Mexican in her own language. With an inquiring look she asked H. what he said, while he, without the least knowledge as to the meaning of her question, turned to D. with,

“She wishes to know if you don’t want to buy that child.”

“The unfeeling brute!” ejaculated D., evidently believing every word of his waggish friend. “Tell her ‘No.’ Tell her I’ve got a wife and three children already, and the Lord only knows how they are provided for. What upon earth does she think I want with her child?”

I turned away from the spot to conceal my laughter, as did several who were present, and who understood the joke. The perfect seriousness with which the wag carried the whole affair through completely deceived D., and I doubt not he really and honestly thought the woman wanted him to purchase her child.

But the anecdote to which I allude occurred on the morning when we left our encampment under the cotton-wood trees, the 8th of December. We had travelled but a few miles before we reached a large monument by the roadside, erected, a year or two previous, to the memory of some colonel in the Mexican service. On the side fronting the road was a long inscription in Spanish, detailing the services the occupant of the tomb had rendered in the Mexican Revolution, his exploits in ridding the country of the Spaniards, and his many heroic, patriotic, and virtuous deeds. While two or three of us were looking at the monument, the two actors in the scene above mentioned came up to examine it. Had the inscription been in Chaldaic, it would have been equally intelligible to either of them; but D. had the most implicit reliance in H. as a translator of Spanish.

“What is all that reading about, captain?” said D.

“On the monument there?” queried H., evidently studying some kind of speech.

“Yes, on the monument there.”

“You want me to translate it, D., do you?”

“I do.”

“Well, it amounts to this—here lies the body of Montezuma’s brother.”

“His *what*?” said D., opening his eyes.



"His brother," coolly replied the imperturbable H., "who came to an untimely end, on the 15th of November, 1598, by the bite of a rattlesnake. This monument is erected as a testimonial of the high esteem in which he was held by *his aunt*."

"His *aunt*?" inquired D., with emphasis.

"By—his—aunt!" answered the wag, slowly and deliberately uttering each word as though there could be no mistake about it.

This was too much, and I was obliged to put my horse into a brisk canter in order to reach a place where I could have my laugh out, without raising suspicions in the mind of D. that the whole thing was "got up" expressly for his benefit. Not a smile could be detected on the countenance of H. while he was giving his extremely free translation, and to judge from outward indications his friend swallowed every word of it.

That night we reached a small hacienda on the Rio Florido, the place where General Pike left the main road when he was conducted through the interior of Mexico. From this point he was escorted out of the country by a detachment of Spanish troops, taking Saltillo, San Antonio de Bexar, and Nacogdoches in their route.

On the next afternoon we arrived at the old and well-known hacienda of La Noria,\* where is a deep and never-failing well. From this well the immense herds of sheep, cattle, and horses raised on the estate are supplied, the water being drawn by two mules attached to an apparatus for the purpose. The hacienda of La Noria was formerly very wealthy, yielding a heavy revenue to its proprietor; but of late years the Camauche and Apache Indians have stolen large numbers of horses, cattle, and sheep, as well as grain, from the neighbourhood, and but a week or two previous to our arrival they had made a descent in the vicinity, killed three or four of the *peons*, or labourers, and carried off a large quantity of plunder. All over the States of Chihuahua and Durango the inhabitants live in continual dread of these savages.

At La Noria we met an Irishman, a lad of some eighteen or twenty years of age, who lived at a small village one or

\* Signifying, in English, *the water-wheel*, or wheel by which water is drawn from a well.



two leagues from the road. Two or three young ladies were also on a visit to the hacienda, having come expressly to see us. Their father was an Irishman who had settled early in the country, but their mother was of Mexican birth, and they could speak no other language than hers. All of them were pretty—one was extremely beautiful. She had the dark, expressive eyes, the long, silken lashes, and the rich brunette complexion of her mother, while from her father, her cheek derived that rosy, healthy tint, which seemed to gain something richer than its native charm when seen struggling, like sunlight, through the soft and beautiful brown of a Castilian skin. We at first supposed they could all speak English, but afterward ascertained that such was not the case. After spending an hour or two at the hacienda they went away, accompanied by their mother and the young Irishman, for their home at the village.

The lady of the house at La Noria was a well-educated woman, having spent some time at an academy in Durango. She also sang very well, and played upon the guitar admirably. When night came she gave us a fandango, which, before it ended, was turned into a musical *soirée*, and we really passed a very agreeable evening. She gave us several Spanish ballads with much feeling, and sang, in Italian, an aria from one of Bellini's operas, showing herself equally conversant with his music and his language. We had several very tolerable singers among ourselves, and from the song, mirth and hilarity which prevailed, a spectator could not have supposed that we were prisoners in a strange land, and profoundly ignorant as to the fate that awaited us. So it was all the way through Mexico. One night we were enjoying ourselves with music and the dance—the next we were shivering over a scanty fire in the open air, and sleeping exposed to such inclemency as the ruler of the elements, might see fit to bestow.\* The very night after the scenes I have described above we were encamped upon a cold hill-side within a couple of miles of Cerro Gordo, not a sign of human habitation in sight.

It was with feelings not a little excited that we entered the miserable town of Cerro Gordo the next morning. At this

\* Neither the Mexicans nor Indians, even where wood is abundant, build large fires. It is a common remark with the Indians, that the Americans make such large fires that they cannot approach near enough to warm themselves.



place Ochoa was to leave us, and we were to be consigned to a new guard. We were to enter a new state, too, that of Durango, and were ignorant as to the treatment we might receive from the governor. During our journey through the State of Chihuahua, a distance of some five hundred miles, we had been treated comparatively well; whether we were to find a continuance of such usage was a matter of great uncertainty, and hence our uneasiness.

As we were taken through the long street upon which the greater part of the town is built, our new commander, Colonel Velasco, was pointed out to us. At the time, I thought him the most unprepossessing specimen of humanity I had ever met with. He was dressed in a light blue roundabout or short jacket, with a small red cord along the seams, and three rows of small silver-plated buttons in front, while his pantaloons were of cloth of the same colour, foxed with green morocco, to prevent his saddle from chafing and wearing them. He wore an enormous pair of whiskers, upon which he had apparently bestowed no attention, and his upper lip was disfigured or ornamented, I leave this point for my readers to decide—with a pair of huge, grizzly, coarse mustaches, which stuck out in almost every direction but the right one. His head was covered with a profusion of long, iron-gray hair, but partially covered by a small, rakish cap, drawn over his eyes as if to conceal any sinister expression they might have. Such is but an imperfect picture of the man who was to have charge of us, and not a person in our party could look at him without a shudder, or without thinking we had fallen into the hands of a second Salezar.

We were taken entirely through the town and confined in an old deserted building. Here, upon the walls, were the names of Cooke, Brenham, Frank Combs, and others, written by themselves a short month previous. During the afternoon we were visited by numbers of the inhabitants, and also by a lively little French woman, who invited several of us to dine at her house. Her husband was dead, having left her a large property, and she evinced the greatest commiseration for our unfortunate condition, as well as a desire to alleviate it as far as lay in her power. At night several of us went to a fandango and cockfight, accompanied by two or three Mexican officers only as a guard. Everywhere we were treated with the greatest civility, and at a late hour we returned to our quarters and took up our hard lodgings upon the cold earthy



floor. There was something in our treatment, so far, that gave us some hopes we had fallen into humane hands; but whenever the picture of Colonel Velasco, with his mustaches, whiskers, and iron countenance, was called to mind, the hopes of being well used in a great measure vanished.

As some little preparation was necessary, in procuring bread-stuffs and other requisites for our journey, it was not until near the middle of the day on the 12th December that we took up the line of march. We had been led to suppose that we were to be taken through Durango, the city of pretty woman and *alicrans*;\* but as Colonel Cooke's party had gone by that route, we were ordered to proceed by a more easterly road. Before our departure, nearly all the officers of our guard who had accompanied us from Chihuahua came to take their leave of us, and bade us a kind farewell. Ochoa

\* I believe that the city of Durango is somewhat celebrated for the beauty and talent of its women—I know that it is noted for the numbers and venomous qualities of its *alicrans*, or scorpions. Frequently, while travelling through the State of Durango, were we regaled with Mexican stories of the swarms of poisonous *alicrans* which infest the capital. Of course I can say nothing of these insects from personal experience, not having been within thirty miles of the city which they inhabit; but if half the tales told me were true, the inhabitants must be kept in continual fear and much trembling on account of them. To children and to elderly persons the bite or sting of the *alicrans* is said to prove fatal, while to the middling-aged they cause suffering the most intense. A bounty of some three or six cents—I have now forgotten the precise sum—is paid by the authorities for each insect secured, and according to some of the stories told us, no inconsiderable business is carried on in the way of catching and bottling the much-dreaded scorpions. As it may not prove uninteresting to many of my readers, I will quote a short paragraph in relation to these singular insects from the narrative of General Pike: "The scorpions of Durango are one of the most remarkable instances of the physical effects of climate I ever saw recorded. They come out of the walls and crevices in May, and continue in such numbers that the inhabitants never walk in their houses after dark without a light, and always shift or examine the bedclothes and beat the curtains previous to going to bed, after which the curtains are secured under the bed, similar to the precautions we take with our mosquito bars. The bite of these scorpions has been known to prove mortal in two hours. The most extraordinary circumstance is, that by taking them ten leagues from the city of Durango they become perfectly harmless, and lose all their venomous qualities." Such are the stories told of the much-dreaded *alicrans* of Durango. Of their size and appearance I could learn little, save that they are an inch or more in length, have many legs, and move with much celerity.



was not among the number, and as he owed several small sums to the Texan officers—money which he had borrowed at different places on the road—for the first time suspicions of his integrity were aroused. These suspicions were farther increased when the trumpet sounded an advance, and we were ordered to proceed. The signal for our departure was also the signal for the entire population to rush to the street through which we were to pass, and as usual we found either side thronged with a crowd of the most motley description—priests, robbers, peons, loafers, soldiers, half-dressed girls, naked children high and low—all eager to obtain a last sight of *los Tejanos*. In the throng we observed many of the girls we had seen at the fandango the night before, waving their hands and murmuring their “*adios, caballeros*” as we passed. Our new guard was composed of about one hundred men belonging to Colonel Velasco’s regiment. They were tolerably well mounted, it being a cavalry regiment, and known by the name of the “Frontier Guard of Durango.” Their uniform is a blue woollen coatee or jacket, trimmed with red, with velvet trousers of the same colour, and instead of a common cavalry cap, they all wear a coarse, wide-brimmed wool hat, with a plate of tin, some two inches in width, entirely circling the crown. Their arms consisted of a carbine, slung to their saddles on the right and with a breech up; on the left side of the saddle is fixed a lance, to the end of which a strip of red flannel or woollen stuff is attached, which flutters gaily as they ride along; a heavy cavalry sword, which clatters at every movement of their horses, completes their equipment, for although a pair of holsters were attached to the pummels of the saddles, I never could see that they contained pistols. All were excellent horsemen, and at a little distance their appearance was decidedly showy and gallant; but a closer inspection convinces that they must prove ineffective men when hard blow and knocks and heavy service are required of them. They rode on either side of us in regular order, and evinced a degree of discipline far superior to that of the raw militia who had heretofore accompanied us; but they were old soldiers, and we argued very favourably as to our future treatment from the politeness, and the many little acts of deference which none but the veteran soldier exhibits to those whom chance may throw in his power. Throughout our long and tedious march we were almost invariably well treated by the regular troops,



while the young and undisciplined recruits and raw militia were overbearing and insolent in their general deportment.

We had reached the confines of the town, and were about striking out into the open country, when a servant of Captain Ochoa came riding up in haste, and delivered a note and small parcel to Mr. Navarro. The note was written in Spanish, very courteously worded, and the purport of it was that Captain O. could hardly trust his own feelings in bidding us farewell in person. He however sent his best wishes for our health and happiness while upon the road, and his hopes that we might be speedily liberated on reaching the city of Mexico. In the same note he stated that, in the parcel which accompanied it, would be found the different sums of money he had borrowed of our officers on the road, with a regret that he had been unable to repay them sooner. Nothing could have been more delicate or more gentlemanly than the tenour of this note. The clouds which had been rising over his fair fame were at once banished, and Captain Ochoa again stood out in the broad, clear light of an honourable man. I know not whether these remarks may ever meet his eye, but if they do, he will see that he has not been forgotten.

There being no settlement within some fifteen leagues of Cerro Gordo, we encamped, the first night, in a little mesquit valley, near a spring of water. Here the true character of Colonel Velasco began to develope itself. He asked the quantity of beef which had been given to each of the prisoners upon the march—apologized for the quality of that he ordered to be killed on the occasion—said it was the best he could procure at Cerro Gordo, and wound up by assuring us that, so long as we were under his charge, we should have the fattest meat and the best bread that could be obtained on the route, and as much as we wished for. Generally speaking, the character and disposition of a man may be read from his countenance; but in this instance we were all deceived. It may have been, however, that the huge whiskers and mustaches of Colonel Velasco completely hid all the better qualities of his mind as reflected in his face, for, unprepossessing as was his countenance, we ever found him a kind-hearted, gentlemanly officer, and disposed to grant us every indulgence in his power.

On our first day's journey from Cerro Gordo we passed a large number of horses and mules, herded on either side of



the road in small droves not exceeding forty or fifty in each gang. The pasturage, as far as the eye could reach, was excellent, with no other trees than an occasional mesquit not much higher than a common thornbush. And here I might mention a fact which may not be generally known to my readers. Those at all conversant with Mexico know that it is far from being a wooded country; but few are aware of the extreme sparsity of trees to be seen while travelling through it, and more especially along the high table-lands. I have seen more trees in one day's travel in the United States than during a journey of three months through Mexico. In fact, every tree met with on the route between Santa Fé and the city of Mexico, with the exception of those which have been planted by the inhabitants, could be set upon twenty square miles in the United States and find a sufficiency of room to grow. The tops of some of the mountains are partially covered with stunted oaks, cedars, and pines, and from these the poorer classes and Indians make charcoal, which ever finds a ready sale in the larger towns and cities. They have no other use for it than to cook their food, fireplaces being nearly unknown after getting as far south as Zacatecas.

We were told, by some of our guard, that the horses we met during the day all belonged to a single hacienda, which we should reach on the following night. The Mexicans related stories that appeared almost incredible in relation to the former prosperity and richness of this hacienda, and the immense number of horses and mules owned at one time by its proprietor. They even went so far as to say, that but a short time prior to the Revolution no less than *three hundred thousand horses* were in the possession of the lady who was then the owner of the estate. Whether this story was true or false I am unable to say; but however incredible it may appear, the story is robbed of much of its extravagance when it is stated that her possessions extended some fifty miles on either side of the road.

Our second day's journey from Carro Gordo was one of some twenty-five miles, yet we were constantly in sight of horses and mules. They were generally in droves of about fifty, each gang herded by a single Mexican, whose only business it was to see that none of them strayed away. Towards nightfall we reached a large hacienda by the roadside, an estate owned by the mistress of the immense tract upon which the horses were pastured. She is a widow, I believe; and although comparatively poor when the immense wealth



of some of the former proprietors is taken into consideration, is still the owner of fifty thousand horses and mules, large herds of cattle and sheep, immense fields of corn and wheat, and has several thousand peons at her different haciendas.

To show the immense wealth of one of the former proprietors of this estate, who like the present, was a widow, I will relate one little anecdote told us while we were there. A short time previous to that revolution which resulted in the separation of Mexico from Spain, and while the estate I have just alluded to was at the zenith of its prosperity, a regiment of dragoons arrived from Spain and landed at Tampico. This regiment was one thousand strong, and of course the men did not bring their horses with them. The colonel of the regiment happening to be a friend of the family of the wealthy proprietress, and well known to her deceased husband, she immediately sent him a thousand white horses as a present, for the use of his regiment. There was hardly a month's difference in the ages of these horses, and every one of them had been raised upon her estate. While we were there, a number of horses were brought to our encampment to be sold, and two or three were disposed of at prices ranging from seven to ten dollars—horses that would readily command from sixty to eighty dollars in the United States. A very well-made and showy bay, of fine action, and not more than five years old, was offered for twenty-five dollars. I am confident he would readily command two hundred dollars in any part of the United States.

And how, it will be asked, is the labour on this immense estate, and others of its kind, effected, and who are the workmen? I have already said that the mistress of the estate had several thousand peons or labourers upon its different branches, and to these unfortunate vassals, for they cannot be called by any other name, are the rich proprietors of Mexico indebted for all their wealth.

The constitution of Mexico guarantees, to all classes and colours, the greatest liberty and equality—the poorest peasant is protected, by the glorious panoply of the law, from every infringement upon his personal liberty—and the most abject beggar in the land has rights and privileges which cannot be trampled upon by his neighbour, be he ever so powerful or wealthy.\* So much for the law and Con-

\* Such was the case while I was in Mexico: as the Constitution is changed, on an average, every six months, a different state of things may exist now.



stitution in theory—the practice is an entirely different matter.

The traveller who visits one of the larger estates in Mexico, finds, in the centre of it, a village, or collection of houses, large or small in proportion to the quantity of land owned by the proprietor. Occupying the most conspicuous situation is the church, generally a strong stone building surmounted by a tower or cupola, with a clear, silvery-sounding bell. The interior is decorated perhaps, with statues of our Saviour, the Apostles, the Virgin, and the patron saint of the hacienda, executed in wood, and frequently arrayed most fantastically; the walls are covered with wretched copies of Scriptural paintings. Close by the church is the residence of the hacendero, or owner, a massive, strong, roomy, but comparatively unfurnished dwelling, in one of the front apartments of which is his store. Here the poor peons purchase their liquor, their cigars, and the little cloth that furnishes their raiment, and at prices the most exorbitant. Adjoining this house are the *trojes*, or barns, where the produce of the estate is stored—strong, substantial buildings. Then come the rude adobe hovels of the common labourers, frequently having but one room, in which the whole family, father and mother, brother and sisters, sons-in law and daughters-in-law, huddle together upon one common earthen floor.

And what relation do these people bear to the hacendero? They are many of them slaves—slaves to all intents and purposes, although they may enjoy a nominal liberty. A large proportion of them, probably, are in some way indebted to the proprietor, the law giving him a lien upon their services until such debts are paid; but most especial good care does he take that they never pay him their obligations so long as their services are in any way profitable. They are in his debt, and are kept so until age or infirmity renders their labour unproductive; then the obligation is cancelled, and they are cast upon the world to beg, steal, or starve, as best they may.

Should some one of the peons, more active, ambitious, or enterprising than his fellows, chance to accumulate money enough to repay his debt and regain his liberty, how then? He offers his master the price of his redemption, but the latter, upon some flimsy pretext, refuses to take it—he has not yet done with the services of the vigorous servant. The



latter flies to the alcalde for redress. The law is on his side, equity is on his side, but the functionary who administers them is very likely a creature of the proprietor, and will not listen to the case of the slave, be it ever so just. The latter attempts to purchase justice by a bribe, but he is outbid by the haciennero. The alcalde shuts his eyes upon justice, opens his hand to the longer purse of the proprietor, and the unfortunate serf is once more driven to bondage. Such, so far as I could see and learn, was the state of things at many of the haciendas we passed upon our journey. The immense wealth, which has fallen into the hands of the few in Mexico, has given them a power over the numerous and abjectly poor which amount nearly to that of the English barons under the feudal system—never will there be a change in favour of the lower orders until a thorough and radical revolution takes place in the very natures of the inhabitants, or until the country falls into other hands.

To resume my narrative. On the 14th of December, our men now much improved and invigorated by the substantial and bountiful supply of food furnished them, we passed the Palo Chino, encamping at a hacienda a few miles farther on. It was at this place, the name of which I did not ascertain, that we had still farther reason to admire the conduct of Colonel Velasco. Calling the officers and merchants together, amounting to some eighteen or twenty, he told us that he had every confidence in our words, and that while in his charge we should be permitted to go where we pleased on our parole of honour. No guard was to accompany us—the only exaction he made, and even that was in the shape of a request, was that we should all be in attendance every morning when the trumpet sounded an advance.

From this time we enjoyed the greatest liberty. When night came, we could select any meron, at the place where we were halted, to sleep in, and could roam about at will. The same liberty would have been granted our men, but that among them were several drunken, worthless fellows, ever ready to abuse every privilege allowed them. The larger portion of the Texans were well-educated, intelligent men, possessing all self-respect; yet they were obliged to suffer from the bad conduct of a few of their associates in imprisonment.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

Arrival at El Gallo, or The Cock.—A rich Silver Mine.—Scenes at a Fandango.—The Well of El Gallo.—Arrival at Dolores.—Guadalupe.—The Prisoners reach Cuencamé.—Strange superstition in relation to a Statue.—Gullibility of the Poorer Classes.—La Senorita Juana.—Captain Roblado.—Hacienda of Juan Perez.—Roblado, and his Treatment of an Alcalde.—Arrival at San Sebastian.—Arrival at Saenea.—Mode of recruiting for the Mexican Army.—Rancho Grande.—Arrival at Fresnillo.—The *Tienda del Gato*.—La Caleta.

Early on the afternoon of the 15th of December we reached the small village of El Gallo, or The Cock.\* It is situated at the foot of a rough and precipitous hill, on the sides of which, it was said, a rich vein of silver ore had just been discovered. This, I wish it to be understood, was but a Mexican story; I give my authority, lest some mining adventurer should be drawn to the spot in search of treasure, which probably has no existence, save in the imagination of the ignorant and gossiping inhabitants.

At night, a fandango was given at the house of the alcalde, attended by some half dozen of the prisoners as well as the very élite of El Gallo. One of the girls was dressed in a yellow-white tunic, or modern gown, of French cut and brought probably from the city of Durango. She undoubtedly wore it in honor of *los Senores Tejanos* and their customs; but there was no necessity of her punishing herself thus severely on our account. That she felt stiff, awkward, and ill at ease under the infliction of the frock was evident, and it would have been all the same to us had she appeared in the common loose dress of her countrywoman. There were others in the room arrayed with the usual Mexican regard to physical liberty and comfort, their easy and graceful movements forming a pleasing contrast to the constrained and straight-jacketish carriage of their companion.

\* The Mexicans give queer names to some of their smaller towns. I recollect sleeping one night at the town of Wheelbarrow.



The evening passed pleasantly away, and had a spectator, unacquainted with our true situation, been present, and seen the Texan officers dancing and waltzing with the Mexican *senoras*, he would not have suspected that we were prisoners. A dance, executed by a Mexican sergeant and one of the girls, afforded much amusement. The name given to it was *danza del la espada*, or sword dance, the difficult and dangerous feats of the sergeant completely eclipsing the tricks of any juggler of the sword-swallowing genus I have ever seen. That he would not only take his own life, but that of his brunette partner in the dance, seemed inevitable; for he cut and slashed about, fell upon his sword, balanced it upon his nose and eyes, and so pointed it at the breast of the girl, that we all felt relieved when the dance was over and ascertained that both had escaped unhurt.

This exhibition gave infinite delight to a score of girls of the poorer class, seated upon the floor at one end of the room. And here I would mention one circumstance, which must have been observed, but appears to have been forgotten or suppressed by all travellers and writers upon Mexico—the singular faculty [the women have of bestowing themselves upon a floor. I have frequently seen a dozen girls seated upon a space too small for even three of any other nation. How they dispose of their nether limbs is a mystery—I only know that they group themselves so closely together, and sit so bolt upright, that one might imagine they had been cut in twain, and the upper portion placed upon the floor after the manner of so many barrels in a storehouse.

At El Gallo is a deep and clear natural well of warm water, from which the town is supplied. Like our negroes, the Mexicans can carry immense loads upon their heads, and processions of girls were seen passing to and from the well at all times, carrying large earthen jars with the greatest steadiness—not spilling a drop, even though the jars were filled to the brim.

The night of the 16th December we spent at a poor rancho, the name of which I have forgotten. The next afternoon we reached the very wealthy hacienda of Dolores, where we saw a very pretty girl, and where we found every comfort. The night of the 18th we passed at the hacienda of Guadalupe, without any incident worthy of note occurring. On the 20th we reached Cuencamé, the largest town we had yet seen, with the exception of El Paso and Chihuahua.



We had no sooner entered the plaza than a little Spanish merchant invited three or four of us to spend our time at his house. He was a proud and fiery little Castilian, fond of relating the exploits of his countrymen, but entertained us with the utmost hospitality and kindness. A very pleasant rest we were allowed at Cuencamé. Some of our officers, not liking the quarters provided for them, hired rooms in the town for the two nights we were to pass there, and during the day we roamed about the place, visiting the churches, cockpits, and tiendas with which it abounds. In the principal church is a singular curiosity, religiously kept and worshipped by the ignorant and superstitious inhabitants of the vicinity. It is nothing more or less than a rude wooden statue of our Saviour. The marvellous story related of it is as follows: Some centuries ago, when the good people of Cuencamé were surrounded and likely to fall into the hands of their enemies, this statue suddenly appeared in their midst, and by wondrous deeds of prowess gave them the battle and rescued them from their foes. The statue was then borne in triumph to the town, a niche set apart for it in the church, and from that day to this it has been held in especial reverence, and looked upon as the guardian and protector of the place.

It was not without regret we now learned that Colonel Velasco was to leave us, the jurisdiction of the State of Durango extended no farther, and his men being required on the northern frontier to guard the inhabitants against Indians. We knew, however, that his influence would have considerable effect upon the officer who was to take charge of the prisoners as far as Zacatecas, and this fact partially consoled us for the loss of one who had ever acted towards us with kindness and consideration.

The pert little Castilian with whom I was quartered had two or three pretty and well-dressed daughters, girls perhaps of sixteen, eighteen, and twenty years, one of whom saw my gold watch lying upon the table in our sleeping apartment, where I had accidentally left it. It was a pretty watch enough to look at, but the rough wooden statue in the adjoining church was just as good a chronicler of the passing hours, it having been injured in my fall before leaving Texas. The girl fell in love with it, however, and mentioned her ardent desire to become its possessor to her father, who hinted



to Van Ness that he would be glad to purchase it for her sake. He approached this subject very delicately: I was an invited guest at his house, and his lofty Castilian pride revolted at the idea of asking me to sell him the article, or at all events he pretended that it did. Van Ness at once communicated to me the wish of our host, adding that he wanted the watch for one of his daughters. I had no desire to dispose of the trinket, but told my comrade to inform the Spaniard that he might have it for a hundred dollars. I thought the price would frighten our host out of all idea of purchasing, but its effect was quite the reverse. He immediately counted out the sum in good Mexican dollars, and with many protestations hoped I would excuse the liberty he had thus taken in asking a guest to sell his private jewellery. Considering the injury the watch had sustained, the price was far above its worth; still I was very unwilling to part with it. It had been my companion for several years; I had carried it thousands of miles, and had succeeded in saving it from the hands of the rascal Salezar. Yet I could not retract; and the next morning I saw the watch gracing the girdle of la Senorita Juana.

The morning after we reached Cuencamé Colonel Velasco called us together and took his leave, at the same time introducing the commandante of our new guard, Captain Roblado. The latter had a face even more sinister in its expression than that of Colonel V., and in this instance the actions of the man did not belie his features. He had been many years in the Mexican service, possessed naturally a sour and morose disposition, with a petulance and ill-humour he but half concealed, even if he attempted so to do. If one anecdote told of him was true, he certainly had no reason to entertain any uncommon friendship for the Texans. It was said that he had received a severe wound from one of Colonel Jordan's men, in the celebrated retreat of the latter from Saltillo, after having been treacherously betrayed into the hands of the Centralists by the Federal General Canales. In the retreat of Jordan, Roblado commanded a company of dragoons sent out to cut him off. By a single fire from the Texans, but little more than a hundred in number, some fifty or sixty Mexicans were tumbled dead from their horses, Roblado receiving a wound in the leg which crippled him for life. Although Colonel Velasco, his superior in rank, had



ordered him to treat us with every civility, which order he obeyed to a certain extent, it was invariably with a spirit of reluctance.

The bread of Cuencamé is noted throughout Mexico for its whiteness and sweetness, and probably a better article is not made in the wide world. Of this Colonel Velasco ordered a large quantity for our use on the road, and he also ordered the fattest ox to be purchased and killed on the journey. This was the man we had supposed a tiger in disposition, until his actions proved him a liberal, mild, and courteous officer.

Every preparation having at length been completed, we left Cuencamé on the morning of the 22nd of December. We passed the first night at a poor rancho by the roadside, and the next evening reached the hacienda of Juan Perez. An American physician, a resident of some town near the city of Durango, had accompanied us the first day's march from Cuencamé. He could give us no other information in relation to Colonel Cooke's party than that they had been tolerably well treated on the route they had taken.

After a long and extremely fatiguing march, over a gravelly and stony road, we reached a poor village late on the afternoon of the 24th. Many of our men were very foot-sore and completely tired out with the long march, so much so that they declared themselves really unable to pursue the journey on foot next day. To allow them a day's rest was deemed utterly impossible by Roblado, and he immediately sent an order summoning the alcalde before him. That functionary soon appeared, when Roblado told him that he must provide a hundred jackasses for the use of the men. The alcalde replied that the place was extremely poor, and that he could not furnish more than ten of the animals required.

"I am a man of few words," answered Captain Roblado. "I want a hundred jackasses for the men to ride to-morrow. If they are not here by six o'clock in the morning I'll make a jackass of you, Senor Alcalde, pack you with the heaviest man in the crowd, and make you carry him to San Sebastian."

"Si, Senor," said the terrified alcalde, and the next morning the requisite number of animals were on the spot in readiness. Here was another instance of the supremacy the military power exerts over the civil in Mexico. Not a cent was paid the poor owners of the animals for services thus



extorted, and Roblado manifested as little compunction on the occasion as a bear would while robbing a beehive. I will not give the man credit for having thus mounted our men through feelings of humanity, believing him to have been actuated by no other motive than that of getting us on as fast as possible.

A tiresome march of some thirty-five miles, over a rough and uneven country brought us to a dirty, miserable little hole which is dignified with the high-sounding name of San Sebastian. This place is situate in a small, sterile valley, amid barren hills, the only vegetation appearing upon their sides being a few stunted prickly pears and thornbushes. How the two or three hundred inhabitants obtain a living is a perfect mystery; in fact, they do not more than half live. Their little huts are built of small stones and mud, without doors or windows—they have neither chairs nor beds, nor in fact furniture of any kind—in fine, are infinitely worse off than Choctaw or Cherokee Indians, not only as regards clothing and food, but habitations and all the necessities of life.

It was on Christmas day that we reached San Sebastian, and anything but “a merry Christmas” did we spend in the wretched hole. Many of us had intended to “keep” the day and night somewhat after the manner of our country, but we could not procure eggs and milk enough in the town to manufacture even a tumbler of egg-nog. We were therefore compelled to make our Christmas dinner of a piece of beef roasted on a stick, with no other than bread and water accompaniments.

While roaming about the town after nightfall, in company with one of our officers, and enquiring for milk and eggs of every man, woman, and child we met, we at length encountered a couple of half-dressed girls, standing within a few steps of one of the houses. We stopped, and were about to ask them if they had the articles we were in search of, when they set up a terrible scream, and scampered into the hovel as though frightened out of the little sense that had been vouchsafed them. Some half dozen starved curs issued from the doorless entrance and commenced yelping at us, and this appeared to be a signal for every dog in the town to join the chorus. Fortunately for us, there was no lack of stones, of a suitable size for throwing, in the vicinity, and I am strongly inclined to believe that several of the barking whelps



had good reasons for regretting that they had attacked us—one, I know, must have required careful and unremitting nursing before he could ever hope to raise another bark at a stranger.

On returning to our quarters, some half an hour afterward, we found that an exceedingly grave charge had already been entered against us by the relatives or friends of the frightened girls, the complainants informing Robaldo that we had not only insulted but chased them, and that had it not been for their faithful dogs it was impossible to imagine where we might have stopped! This was too rich. We told Robaldo the circumstances exactly as it had occurred, with one exception: as there was a remote probability that the plaintiffs might obtain a bill for damages sustained by their dogs, we did not even hint to Robaldo our knowledge of the virtue possessed by stones, or that either of us had ever thrown one in our lives. Thus ended our Christmas frolic at San Sebastian.

At an early hour the next morning we were on the road. I looked around me, as we filed through the narrow and crooked lane leading from the town, expecting to see an occasional dead dog, or a limping one at least; but the search was fruitless. A thousand open mouths were grinning, growling, grinding their teeth, and barking at us every step—the killed and wounded had probably been provided for. Has any one of my readers, in his journeying, ever noticed that the poorest towns and families always have the most and the meanest dogs? If he has not, I have, often.

We had proceeded a mile, or probably less, when suddenly one of our men was seen rising in the air, somewhat after the manner of a rocket, and then descending with even greater velocity. He had only been hoisted by one of those peculiar kick-ups which no animal but a donkey can give, but fortunately was only slightly injured. Many of the animals which had been pressed into the service by Robaldo, although the forced contract with the alcade extended no farther than to San Sebastian, were still retained to carry our more lame and infirm comrades; had it not been for this, many of them would have suffered dreadfully, as the march was nearly forty miles in length. How these animals sustain themselves is unaccountable; for they had nothing to eat for the thirty-six hours they were with us, and then had to retrace their steps over the same ground, and with the same nourishment. They



stopped over night at San Sebastian, going and coming ; but there was not food enough in the vicinity of that town to afford a respectable maintenance for a small flock of killdees.

Just at dusk we entered the town of Saenea, deep in a narrow but fertile and beautiful valley, which is bordered on every side by frowning hills and mountains. The location of this town, which contains some two thousand inhabitants, is picturesque in the extreme, and in addition it is one of the cleanest places we met with in the country. Here, for the first time, we saw the orange tree in full bearing. Although we had been travelling for near a month in the latitude in which that delicious fruit arrives at perfection, the elevation of the table-lands we had journeyed over made the air too cold for it to thrive. At Saenea, too, we for the first time saw the celebrated *maguey* plant, from which *pulque*, the principal beverage of the country, is extracted. The process of gathering this fluid is by cutting off the centre shoot of the plant, in the hollow of which, holding about a pint, the pulque finds a basin. This little basin fills two or three times a day with the sap of the plant, which, after being slightly fermented, is drunk in immense quantities by the natives.

The process of extracting the sap from the basin is primitive, and not well adapted to make it palatable to all tastes. The person to whom this part of the business is entrusted has a long tube made expressly for the purpose, one end of which he inserts in the basin and the other in his mouth, and then, by exercising what is generally termed the power of suction, he draws the liquid from the fountain-head to his own. It next finds its way to some skin or trough, and after being allowed to ferment, is considered fit to drink. Foreigners become extremely fond of it after much use, and many of them drink it to even greater excess than the natives. For myself, one swallow was quite sufficient—I never tasted it a second time. Some of the Mexican officers insisted that it was very refreshing, and palatable withal, and pressed me to try another cup. I told them I had little doubt it was a very fine drink to those who liked it, but that it did not exactly suit my taste—and here the matter ended. To me it had the flavour of stale small-beer mixed with sour milk, and the odour of half-tainted meat as it approached my nose. Moreover, the system of hydraulics by which the sucker first extracted it was not altogether such as met with my approval. I am not sure that I should have taken a single swallow, had I



not been assured that it had first undergone a ten days' fermentation.

Of itself, *pulque* is slightly intoxicating, but by distillation a very strong liquor is made from it, called *mescal*, or *aguardiente de maguey*. This is also a very common drink among the lower orders of Mexico, who are much addicted to intemperance. The soldiers will almost invariably get intoxicated upon mescal whenever they have the opportunity, regardless of the severe flogging they are certain to receive for the transgression.

The abuses of the *maguey* end with the *mescal*, but its valuable uses do not cease with the *pulque*. From its leaves, which are frequently eight or ten feet in length by one foot in width, not only thread but rope is made, both strong and durable. The fibrous part is first twisted into thread, which is useful for an endless variety of purposes, and this can at any time be manufactured into rope of any size. Immense plantations of maguey, where it is planted in rows some ten feet apart, and cultivated with great care, may be found in the vicinities of Guanajuato, Queretaro, Mexico, and Puebla, and yield large revenues to their proprietors.

As we were about starting from Saenea, some thirty miserable, half-dressed, and, to judge from their appearance, half-starved wretches, were taken from a prison adjoining our quarters and marched into the plaza. Who or what they were we could not imagine, but that they were arrant knaves and cut-throats was plainly visible in their countenances. The officer who had charge of them immediately produced a long rope with shorter ropes attached to it at intervals of about a yard. Each end of these shorter ropes was made into a slip-noose, the distance of the noose from the main cord being eighteen inches or two feet. While we were alternately watching this singular contrivance and casting our eyes at the group of ragged wretches around it, the officer called upon one of them to advance to the head of the rope. His right arm was then drawn through the noose, the officer roughly pulling it tight. Another of the jail-birds was next made fast by his left arm to the opposite end of the short rope, and in this way the whole gang were strung together, and marched off under a strong guard directly upon our route.

On inquiry, one of the Mexican officers told us they were *volunteers*, on their way to the city of Mexico to join the army. The real truth was, they were convicts of the worst



description, murderers and thieves, on their way to the capital to be manufactured into soldiers: yet abandoned as were those wretches, some of them had mothers and sisters who clung to them until the last, and were with difficulty forced away. With tears, they gave their vagabond sons and brothers the last remnants of tortillas and chile in their possession, and followed them with their eyes until lost in the distance. How strong is a mother's or a sister's love!

After being washed and cleaned up, and having uniforms put upon them, these convicts are drilled until they become familiar with the use of arms; but they can never make good soldiers. Our own men, who were in every way better treated, and guarded with far less strictness, made themselves not a little merry at the expense of the different strings of "*Involuntary Volunteers*," or "*United Mexicans*," as they were pleased to term them, whom we afterward met on our journey.

Immediately on leaving Saenea, our road led us up the steep sides of a mountain, difficult to climb, and of tiresome length. Once at the summit, however, we were partially repaid for our toil by the prospect below us. Cleanly and neatly built as was the town we had just left, and beautiful as we thought its situation while gazing from the plaza at the bold and rugged mountains on every side, distance now certainly lent an enchantment we had not perceived before. Irrigating canals were seen extending in every direction; small patches of maguey, with their long, coarse leaves, gave a picturesque air to the scenery: the orange groves, now concealing, now disclosing the dwelling of some more wealthy proprietor, were clad in richest foilage, and yellow with golden fruit, although January was about closing the doors of the old year; the whole scene was mellowed by the distance, and was one of that varied and subdued beauty seldom met with in other lands than Mexico.

Our march, in the earlier part of this day, was over a country broken by rugged hills, and desolate from lack of vegetation. In the afternoon, however, we came to a more level tract, and ere nightfall reached a large and wealthy estate, known as the Rancho Grande, having on it a neat church, and a new and commodious *meson* for the reception of travellers. In all my journeyings through Mexico, I do not remember having seen any other house bearing the evident marks of recent construction, or a single dwelling in progress. All presented the strongest tokens of age—many were crumb-



ling and tottering under the influence of decay. In that falling Republic the traveller sees no new towns springing into existence, no improvements in those that are already built, none of that bustle and activity which indicate a healthy state ; but on the contrary, such of the villages and cities as are not stationary are going to ruin, and will continue to do so, slowly, perhaps, but surely, unless wars and revolutions cease, or the country falls into other hands. Of the former there is little hope ; for such is the nature of the population, and so jealous, selfish, and ambitious are the men by whom that population is handled and governed, that no confidence can be placed in the stability of any form of government that can be set up.

At Rancho Grande we met an American, who informed us that Colonel Cooke's party had passed through the large mining town of Fresnillo about three weeks before, and that we should probably reach the same place the next day. The name of this American I do not recollect ; I only remember that he said he was making his way out of Mexico as fast as a good mule would allow him, but the cause of his hot haste he did not mention.

As our informant conjectured, we arrived at Fresnillo early in the afternoon of the next day. It is a town containing some fifteen or twenty thousand inhabitants, has a large square with a costly fountain in the centre, and several large and showy churches. Within a mile are the celebrated mines of Fresnillo, among the most profitable, at the present time, in Mexico, if we were rightly informed. They are worked by steam, and the general superintendence is in the hands of Englishmen, although an American gentleman has charge of the hacienda. I have forgotten the revenue of this celebrated mine, which is owned by a Mexican family ; but it is immense. The entire population of Fresnillo derive their support in some way from the mines ; yet the most squalid poverty is to be met at every turn.

During the afternoon and evening we were visited by several of the foreigners, and after dark a small party of us spent three or four hours very agreeably with a young Englishman employed about the mines. His residence was at some distance—too far for us to visit—but he appeared to be quite at home at the "*Tienda del Gato*," or Shop of the Cat—a singular name this for a confectionery or coffee-



house, but such has the owner given it. In it was one of the largest cats I ever saw, and over the door was a painting which the proprietor informed us was a likeness of the animal. The painting was a most atrocious daub, and absolutely required some key to explain the intention of the artist. Had the animal within been a kangaroo or a grizzly bear, the strange figure over the door would have done as well for either as for the cat.

After being comfortably seated, our Englishman manufactured a generous bowl of excellent egg-nogg. Over this, and with the usual accompaniments of smoking, story-telling, and anecdotes of travel, we passed a very pleasant evening, forgetting that we were prisoners in a strange land. Not until midnight did we return to the quarters provided for us at a meson, our acquaintance promising to see us before we set off in the morning. He said that the foreigners of Fresnillo had made up a liberal subscription for Colonel Cooke's party, and that they would endeavour to do something for the more unfortunate among our men.

Although many of the prisoners were worn down by our long and tiresome marches, we remained at Fresnillo but one night. Roblado said that Zacatecas was only some fifty miles distant, and that there we should be allowed a rest of two days.

Mexican-like, the streets of Fresnillo were thronged as we left it. The prisons of the place had been delivered of sixty or seventy convicts, hardened malefactors, whose very aspect showed a knowledge of every crime in the calendar. These were pinioned after the manner of those at Saenea, attached to the same rope, and driven under a strong guard before us. Not the least notice did the inhabitants of Fresnillo take of these wretches—it was no uncommon thing with them to see their fellow-beings tied and driven like brutes to the shambles; but Texans they had never seen before, and to catch a glimpse at us they rushed, squeezed, hustled, and crowded the streets, their curiosity raised to the highest pitch.

I will say one thing in favour of the Mexican population generally—they seldom manifested any feelings of exultation in our presence. On the contrary, the mild and subdued eyes of the poor Indians were turned upon us invariably in pity, while the crowds through which we passed, in all the large cities, appeared rather to be actuated by commiseration.



tion than triumph or hatred, Jews and heretics though they thought and termed us. With all their bad qualities, the Mexican people, as a body, are kind and benevolent, and disposed to grant every favour and indulgence to strangers who have been unfortunate. Let it be understood that I am speaking of the lower orders, and consequently the mass. In a journey of over two thousand miles through the country, during which we saw many of the largest towns and cities, I do not recollect that we were publicly insulted on more than one occasion after leaving El Paso. This speaks much for the lower orders, when it is understood that they might at any time have practised many acts of insolence towards us with impunity.

On our first day's march from Fresnillo, a mail-stage passed us on its way to Zacatecas. It was manufactured at Troy, New York, was of the same class as the stages in use in the United States, and as it rattled by, full of passengers, forcibly reminded us of freedom and of home.

At night we reached a poor rancho called La Caleta, where we stopped to sleep. Here one of our men, who had been complaining for two or three days, exhibited unequivocal symptoms of that loathsome disease, the small-pox. Eruptions appeared on every part of his body, he became partially delirious, and although we hoped that the disease might prove one of a lighter nature than appearances indicated, all were disappointed. It was small-pox of the worst type, and as there was no guarding against the infection, each one of our party could only hope that he might not become its victim.



## CHAPTER XXV.

**Approach to Zacatecas.—Character of the Inhabitants.—Passage through the City.—Arrival at an Irish Restaurant.—Visit to a New York Gentleman.—A Stroll through Zacatecas.—Dinner at the Restaurant.—Painting of Washington.—Mr. Falcener in Trouble.—Mexican Justice.—Dr. Whittaker's Mode of getting rid of a troublesome Sentinel.—Liberality of a Mexican Lawyer.—Departure from Zacatecas.—Convent of Guadalupe.—Santa Anna, and his Fight with the Zacatecans.—Refugio.—Arrival at Ojo Caliente.—A Bathing Scene.—Customs of the Mexican Women, and their Fondness for Swimming.—El Carro.—Arrival at Salina.—A Kentucky Circus Proprietor.—Modes of Living, and Customs of the Lower Orders in Mexico.**

On the morning of December 30th we commenced ascending the high range of mountains to the northward of Zacatecas. A very good road winds up the sides, but the ascent, was steep and tiresome. Small parties of women, driving asses and mules from market, were passed as we toiled up, and exhibited no little astonishment as they gazed at us.

On reaching the summit we had a fine view of the valley through which we had just travelled, the distant smoke of the mines at Fresnillo being plainly visible, with the numerous little ranchos we had passed. Before us, and on different points of the mountain tops, the silver mines of Zacatecas were seen—many of them deserted, while others were still in operation. As we descended the mountain, the parties of market-women became still larger and more frequent. We continued our winding way down the sides until within half a mile of the city, wondering where a spot could be found for the habitations of men in a vicinity so wild; for mountain was piled upon mountain on every hand, with no other passes between them than yawning *barrancas*, or deep ravines. We could not believe that we were near one of the richest and proudest cities of Mexico, until a sudden turn in the road brought it fully into view with all its domes,



spires, palaces, churches, and convents. A more picturesque or grander spectacle can hardly be imagined than the city of Zacatecas as entered from the north. It appears to be hemmed in on almost every side by high and precipitous mountains, and of course has but scanty suburbs. The deep ravine in which it is built is filled with houses, even to the very base of the mountains, which seem in many places, ready to slide and fall upon the town below them. The streets are not very wide, but are almost straight, and many of the buildings are of large size, handsome architecture, and costly and elaborate workmanship.

Before we entered the city a halt was called, for no other purpose than that Captain Roblado might change his ordinary fatigue-dress for a gaudy uniform, and mount a dashing bay horse upon which to "show off" at the head of a body of ragged Texan prisoners. With a loud blast from the Mexican trumpets we were then ordered to advance. Housetops, balconies, doors, and windows were filled with women and children on either side of us, and a crowd so dense thronged the streets that every exertion of the dragoons was needed to force a way through the ragged, dirty, and squalid mass. On many occasions the lower orders of this city have manifested great hostility towards foreigners, not a few unfortunate heretics, or Jews as they are more frequently termed, having been hooted and stoned from its gates; but latterly this hostility has in a great measure subsided, and not an insult was offered to us by a single individual. It may be that our forlorn and destitute appearance, and a belief that the government would punish us with the utmost severity, chilled any feeling of hostility into silence. Many of the foreigners on the road openly expressed their fears that we might be ill-used and insulted at Zacatecas, but such was not the case.

We were taken completely through the city, passing numerous churches, convents, and palaces, besides the *mineria*, or mint. One of the buildings we passed was a large quartel, filled apparently with convicts destined to swell the ranks of Santa Anna's army; and the wretches gazed at us, as we went by them, with malicious looks. After going by the *paseo*, a large enclosure set with trees, we reached the outskirts of the town, and then, after climbing a steep hill, were marched into an old deserted mining-house, and locked up. Two mouldy, dirty rooms were set apart



for our use, and even these were not sufficiently large to accommodate us all with shelter; but as Roblado would not allow us to go out of the place without permission from the governor, there we were obliged to take up our quarters for the night.

To show how uncomfortably we passed our first night at Zacatecas, I will describe the sleeping apartment in which I was allowed such space on the floor as I could cover with my person—no more. The room was about fifty feet in length, by twenty-five in width, destitute of windows, had a broken and uneven tile floor, and from having been long deserted, the walls were damp, mouldy, and fast crumbling to decay. No air found its way into this gloomy hole, save through the door, and as the night was raw and cold, even this we were fain to close, to protect those immediately around it from the piercing blasts. There were seventy of us in the room, all rolled up in blankets upon the floor; and when I add that many of the men were covered with every species of vermin, others suffering with distressing coughs, and one in the worst stage of that loathsome disease the small-pox, the reader is under no necessity of racking his fancy to imagine that we passed anything but a comfortable or pleasant night.

Early in the morning Van Ness obtained permission for Falconer, Doctor Whittaker, and myself to accompany him into the city, we all promising Roblado that the confidence he placed in us should not be abused. Scarcely had we entered one of the principal streets before we were surrounded by a gang of half-dressed urchins—inquisitive little fellows who jogged along on either side of us, and examined us as closely as they would so many strange beasts in a menagerie. As we passed the houses, the cry of "*Mira! mira! los Tejanos!*" would be heard from the women and girls, and then a general scampering and rush to the doors and windows to obtain a sight of our little party.

In order to get rid of the constantly-increasing crowd of boys, we quickened our pace, and after turning three or four corners, reached a large and well conducted *restaurant* kept by an Irishman. This we entered, and immediately called for a breakfast such as we had not seen or tasted for eight months. It consisted simply of beefsteaks, mutton chops, boiled eggs, Irish potatoes, coffee and claret—all simple and common enough—but then we had long been



unused even to such a variety, and having a table before us, with chairs to sit on, and knives and forks to eat with, we did ample justice to our breakfast. The wife of our host, or female superintendent of the establishment—I am uncertain which—made her appearance just as we had finished our meal. She was a stout, fresh, red-cheeked Irish woman, wore a clean, flowing, and neatly-crimped cap, and as she was the first female I had seen since we left the frontiers of Texas who naturally spoke my language, I could not but regard her as my countrywoman, although she had a brogue as rich as that of the lamented Power in Pat Rooney.

Leaving the restaurant, I went to a German tailor and ordered such articles of clothing as I stood most in need of, and then had my measure taken for a pair of boots by a Mexican shoemaker next door. They were all to be delivered at our quarters at the old mining-house on the following morning, and the prices of the different articles were about the same as are paid in New Orleans and other Southern cities of the United States—a trifle cheaper, perhaps. My next visit was to the office of an American gentleman, a New-Yorker, who showed me every attention and kindness. After writing several letters to my friends in the United States, we visited the different churches and public buildings of the town, attracting all the while not a little attention from the inhabitants, although no rudeness was offered us. The day was cloudy and raw, with intervals of rain; but regardless of this, we roamed about the place until dinner-time. I may here add, that from the day on which we left San Miguel, in October, to the time of which I am speaking—the 1st of January—we had not been annoyed by an hour's rain.

At two o'clock we again visited the restaurant and ordered dinner, selecting corned beef, cabbage, and the like plain "substantials," instead of the tempting knick-knackeries, decoy-birds, and other luxuries that were hanging in profusion in the windows, or otherwise displayed with that ostentation so characteristic of eating establishments, as well in Zacatecas as in New Orleans or New York. How much have restaurant keepers, the world over, to answer for in the way of leading gouty gourmands and dyspeptic subjects into temptation by these window exhibitions!

We had scarcely finished our meal when a servant arrived with an invitation from a Mexican gentleman, a lawyer, to



visit his house and partake of his hospitalities. We found dinner over when we reached the house, the servant having been searching some two hours before he found us ; but at a table covered with choice wines and cigars, we joined Mr. Navarro, General McLeod, and two or three Texan officers, besides a pair of fat, jolly priests, and in such mixed but goodly company we passed an hour very pleasantly. Our kind host was a distinguished advocate of the place, extremely liberal in his opinions, as were also the priests. In the centre of the library, and occupying the most conspicuous part of the room, was a well-executed painting of General Washington, enclosed in a splendid frame. Before we retired, our entertainer delivered a neat eulogy, extremely well expressed, upon the "Father of his Country," manifesting the high regard in which his memory was held. This little incident over, our party took their departure, leaving our friends still at the table.

After a ramble of some two hours, we once more repaired to the restaurant and ordered a luxurious supper, determined to make the most of our time and commence the new year as happily as possible—at least in the way of eating. We had scarcely finished our meal when a party of Mexican gentlemen invited us into an adjoining room to partake of wine with them. Shortly after, an English gentleman arrived from Fresnillo, with whom we had become acquainted there, and who insisted upon our supping with him. This pressing invitation we were compelled to refuse ; but we joined him in a glass of wine. There was to be a splendid New-year's ball given that evening, to which we had received an invitation. Just as we were going to it, with full anticipations of finishing a delightfully-spent day by a ball at night, one of the officers of our guard, a bustling, fretful little Mexican, rushed into the room out of breath, and ordered us instantly to accompany him to our disagreeable quarters of the previous night. From his excited manner we could easily perceive that something had gone wrong, but the nature of his mission was not revealed until we had reached the gloomy prison, which we had determined not to visit until the following morning. The night was rainy and pitchy dark, the hill we were obliged to climb was steep and so slippery from the moistened clay that we could with difficulty make the ascent. Three or four times we fell sprawling to the earth while clambering to the summit ; and



it was not until we were all covered with mud, and wet to the skin, that we passed the portals, and the heavy gates of the old mining-house were locked upon us—a sad termination to a pleasantly-spent day, but such ever appeared to be our fortune.

We were not long kept in suspense as to the cause of this sudden and unlooked-for movement. It appeared that the Governor of Zacatecas had that evening received a letter from General Tornel, Minister of War and Marine at Mexico, ordering him instantly to place in close confinement, and under strict guard, Colonel Milam, Antonio Navarro, and Robert Foster. The former had been dead for years, having been killed at the Alamo of San Antonio. Mr. Navarro was then on the spot, but no person answering to the name of Robert Foster could be found, and Roblado questioned each one of the prisoners and examined the different lists thoroughly. The only name that came anywhere near Robert Foster was *Thomas Falconer*, and Roblado presuming that he must be the person alluded to, he was instantly sent for with the rest of us. We all told the captain that Mr. F. was not the man; but this did not alter his purpose, and poor Falconer was accordingly placed in a small, close room with Mr. Navarro, two sentinels being paraded before them, who shouted "*centinela alerta!*" every ten minutes during the dreary night, to keep themselves from falling asleep.

In the mean while, Van Ness, Whittaker, and myself were constrained again to occupy our disagreeable apartment, where we passed our New-year's night—now rendered doubly disagreeable to us by contrast with the expected pleasures of the ball, in which we had promised ourselves such delights as would have made some amends for the annoyances and hardships of our unwilling journey.

We were no sooner in the close and dreary room than new inconveniences presented themselves; for not supposing until the Mexican officer came in such haste for us at the Irishman's fonda, that we were to pass the night at the old mining-house, we had made no preparations for our lodging before leaving it in the morning. On our return, therefore, we found that our blankets had already been taken and our places occupied by some of our friends, leaving us almost as badly situated as was poor Falconer. The night, as I have said, was raw, rainy, and uncomfortable, and we were



obliged to take up our quarters near the door. A drunken sentinel, whose duty it was to walk outside and see that none of us left the room, finally opened the door and took his station within—and not content with thus annoying us, he howled the disagreeable “*centinela alerta!*” almost incessantly in our ears, until Dr. Whittaker took a summary way of getting rid of both his presence and his noise. The doctor told the fellow to shut the door and his mouth; the sentinel answered impudently; the next moment the doctor knocked him sprawling into the mud outside, musket and all, and then closed and fastened the door after him. We expected that the fellow would make a complaint, and that we should receive a visit from the officer of the guard for an explanation; but we never heard anything more of it.

An American gentleman promised to forward the letters I had written to my friends in the United States, in such a way as would ensure their safe delivery; and he kept his word, for every one of them reached its destination. I speak of this circumstance, as many of the letters I sent from different points in Mexico never left the country—at least they did not arrive in the United States. Generally speaking, the mail arrangements of Mexico are well conducted, and letters and newspapers are forwarded with promptness and great regularity; but the postmasters who stopped my letters doubtless knew that they were written by some one of the prisoners, and thought they were serving their country by detaining them; or perhaps they had orders to do so.

A subscription was got up among the foreigners in Zacatecas for the benefit of the Texan prisoners, and a sum exceeding one thousand dollars, besides no inconsiderable quantity of clothing, hats, and shoes was raised for their necessities, the governor and some of the Mexicans subscribing liberally. The clothing was distributed, and also a small sum of money to each man; but the larger portion was applied to the hiring of two large American wagons for transporting the sick and infirm, as well as the blankets and small bundles of the prisoners. The lives of many of our men were doubtless saved by the timely assistance of these wagons, as by this time numbers were ill with the small-pox, and neither Roblado nor the governor dared take the responsibility of leaving the poor fellows behind in the hospital.



At an early hour on the morning of January 2nd, the wagons which had been hired, arrived at the foot of the hill, below the old mining-house, and the sick were as comfortably stowed in them as circumstances would admit. Shortly after, five horses were sent to our quarters, saddled and bridled, being presents to some of the Texan officers from the Mexican lawyer who had treated us so kindly. After partaking of an excellent breakfast, sent us by a French gentleman, we were ordered once more to resume the march towards the city of the Montezumas.

The main body of prisoners were guarded with no more strictness than heretofore, but an extra guard was detailed for the special purpose of watching Messrs. Navarro and Falconer—riding close by their side and eyeing their every movement. There was something peculiarly hard in the case of the latter. He was more anxious than any of the prisoners to examine thoroughly such of the cities and towns as we might pass through, had never harboured a single hostile feeling against the country, was innocent of any inimical act, and was now kept a close prisoner, and debarred every little privilege granted the rest of us, for no other reason than that *Thomas Falconer* sounded more like *Robert Foster* than any other name on the list. Tornel had seen the name of the latter attached to some of the papers taken at the capture of General McLeod, and supposing that he was an important personage, and among the prisoners, had ordered him to be closely confined and strictly watched. The real personage, whose name, by-the-way, was not Robert, was all the while peaceably and quietly pursuing his avocations as principal clerk in the war-office at Austin, Texas.

Some five or six miles from Zacatecas we passed the celebrated Convent of Guadalupe, an immense pile of buildings, enclosed within a large yard. We could plainly see a number of melancholy, pale-visaged monks, gazing at us from the small windows, doors, and balconies of the place. Near this convent, in 1835, the noted battle between Santa Anna and the Zacatecans was fought, which resulted in the discomfiture of the latter, and the subsequent sack of the city. It is said that both armies were defeated, and that both were on the point of retreating; but that Santa Anna, happening to see a panic among his opponents before they noticed that his men were wavering, was enabled to rally and



turn the current in his favour. In the general sack which soon after took place in the city, the houses of the foreigners, who had taken no part in the opposition to Santa Anna, were indiscriminately plundered with the rest, and two or three gallant Englishmen and Americans were killed while stoutly defending their dwellings. Indemnification for the losses sustained by the foreigners in this outrage has since been made by the Mexican government.

A short time after the sack of Zacatecas, Santa Anna was on his way to Texas; and in less than six months after the man who had filled grave yards with victims to his avarice and ambition was upon his knees, cowering like a hound, and with uplifted hands begging a life he had richly forfeited by his massacre of Fannin and his men, at Goliad, if by no other crime. The ups and downs of this man, than whom no one better qualified can be found to govern his own countrymen, would form a singular history.

Leaving the Convent of Guadalupe, our road led us across level plains until we reached the village of Refugio, where we encamped for the night. Our nearest route to the city of Mexico would have been by a road more to the right; but as Colonel Cooke and his party had been taken in that direction, it was determined by the Mexican government to give the inhabitants of San Luis Potosi and Guanajuato an opportunity to see a portion of the Texan prisoners, and we were therefore ordered to visit those cities in our march. We had plenty of leisure, however, and as our route took us through the more interesting portion of the country, and gave us an opportunity of seeing several of the finest cities, we cared but little for the extra delay it occasioned.

Early in the afternoon of January 4th, after a pleasant march, we reached the town of Ojo Caliente. Here we were allowed to ramble about wherever we pleased, and there being a noted warm well on the edge of the town several of our party visited it for the purpose of bathing. The water boils up in great quantities, and forms a large, deep basin from the very fountain head. Several of the prisoners immediately divested themselves of their clothing, and dashed into the refreshing element, diving and swimming about in water just warm enough to be comfortable. Before they left the large natural bathing tub the party was increased by the arrival of several Mexican girls, who, not



in the least daunted by the presence of the Texans, immediately joined them in their aquatic sports. With merry and joyous laughter they commenced splashing the water about them; now diving to the bottom, and then rising to the surface, shaking the water from their long hair, and paddling about like Newfoundland dogs. It may not have been generally remarked, and may not be always the case, but nearly all the females I have seen swim—Mexicans, Indians, and all—paddle along after the manner of water dogs, and one of them makes more noise than a dozen of the other sex. In San Antonio, where the women are excellent swimmers and visit the river regularly once or twice a day, the noise a party of them make might be mistaken for that of so many porpoises or sea-horses.

That the females living upon many of the rivers and lakes of Mexico take to the water so naturally, and appear upon its surface divested of those loose garments with which our American ladies are wont to array themselves upon such occasions, may be looked upon as betraying a want of modesty by some of my fair readers; but with the girls of Mexico there is an absence of all thought that they are doing wrong, which should fully exculpate them from blame. The customs of the country sanction the occurrence of scenes such as I have just mentioned, and many others which would be deemed highly indelicate in other lands; and however much the foreigner may at first be tempted to doubt their strict correctness, he soon learns that no conventional rules forbid them. True modesty consists in the thought which governs every action; and viewed in this light, there was certainly no immodesty in the girls of Ojo Caliente indulging in a bath, even if they did appear "right before folks," as the philosophic Sam Slick would say.

On the ensuing night we reached El Carro, a fine hacienda belonging to the wealthy Count of Jaral. About noon on the 6th we were halted at the town of Salina, where there are extensive salt-works. Here, at the meson where we stopped, we found a stout Kentuckian, who was one of the owners of an American circus company then performing at San Luis Potosi. He was now on his way to Zacatecas, for the purpose of obtaining a suitable place in which to perform in that city, and at the same time the consent of the governor. As he had arrived at Salina a short time before us, he had,



of course, selected the best room in the meson for his own use. This room happening to please Captain Roblado, he ordered the circus proprietor to leave it; but the latter told him at once that he had the best right, and should retain possession as long as he pleased. Roblado fumed and swore a little, and then left the place, threatening to bring the alcalde to his assistance. The Kentuckian went soon after to the alcalde's residence, but before he reached it he found that Roblado had been there before him, and had procured a writ of ejectment. The American was now forced to leave the room; but he remarked that if he had but reached the alcalde's first, and slipped a dollar into his hand, he could have retained possession of the room even though fifty Roblados had wanted it. The dollar is the most powerful weapon with many of the officers of justice in Mexico, and when it is employed law and equity must step aside.

The English or American traveller, used to the comforts and conveniences of his own well-kept taverns, meets with but a sorry reception and miserable fare at the Mexican house of entertainment, or *meson*, as it is called. They are all built in the same style, the entrance being through a large gate or passage-way which leads into a *patio*, or court, in the interior. On either side of this yard are the rooms set apart for the reception of travellers. Another passage leads from this into the yard which his beast occupies, and which has a large trough of water in the centre, with uncomfortable stalls on the sides. The tired wayfarer is conducted to his room; but no friendly bed meets his anxious gaze. He sees, perhaps, a species of form, built of adobes and mortar upon which he can spread his *sarape*, or Mexican blanket, and himself; and mayhap, a corner of the floor is pointed out to him as a favourite spot on which to establish himself for the night; neither bed nor bedding is provided by the landlord. The next care of every prudent traveller is to bring his saddle, bridle, and the other trappings of his horse or mule, together with all and singular his own personal effects, into his room. If he understands well the population, he contrives to sleep upon as much of his property as possible, to prevent the leperous and ladrones from appropriating it during the night; for every Mexican town has its band of petty pilferers, ready to steal the very strings from the traveller's shoes, should he not take the precaution to lie down and sleep with them on.



The wayfarer is now housed—his next care is for his inward man, and here new difficulties arise. The Mexican landlord sets no public table—provides no meal, and very likely keeps no provisions fit for his foreign guests. At the *cocina*, or kitchen, amid the steams of rank and highly-seasoned stews, he may esteem himself lucky if he can purchase a bowl of mutton broth, a coarse earthen platter of frijoles, or, perchance, a guisado so particularly high-seasoned with red pepper that the skin of his mouth is in danger of going down his throat at the first swallow. Ten chances to one if he is fortunate enough to find knife, fork, or spoon—articles by no means necessary in Mexican housekeeping. But what need of these when he has his own good fingers and a plate of those ever-accompanying and never-failing thin cakes, yclept tortillas, to fall back upon? The soup he drinks from the bowl; a spoon he manufactures by tearing off a piece of tortilla and doubling it into a species of scoop, and with this he is enabled to shovel up a mouthful of his frijoles or guisado and carry it to his jaws. Tortilla and all are swallowed, for with every fresh mouthful a fresh spoon is made. Should the stranger happen to swallow a bit of guisado so outrageously hot with red pepper that from very agony a freshet of tears starts from his eyes, some by-standing Mexican exclaims that it is “bueno por el estomago”—good for the stomach! Fine consolation this, especially for an American; for what does an American care for his stomach? We may all fume and rage against Mrs. Trollope and Dickens, and work ourselves into a most patriotic fury at their strictures; but it cannot be denied that too many of us impose terrible taxes upon our digestive organs by bolting our food in over-haste and half masticated. Too many of us, again, consult but our tastes. We make a hopper of our mouths, feed it to overflowing with the richest dishes until that trough and reservoir called the stomach is running over, stop suddenly in our eating, rush to business as though life and death depended upon our exertions, and spend half our lives wondering why we are troubled with indigestion and dyspepsia! I hope my countrymen will pardon the truth and the episode, while I go back to the tavern.

There is one thing the traveller in Mexico gets in all its perfection, and that is chocolate. They may have it as good in Spain—but in no part of the United States, or of the British possessions upon its borders, can anything approach—



ing it be made—so fragrant, so rich, so delicious. But when he has swallowed his chocolate, there is an end to everything like perfection. The traveller, if anywhere in the vicinity of the *tierras calientes*, may eke out his dinner with the fruits which grow there in endless variety and profusion, and of most delicious and nutritious quality; but nowhere need he look for the roast beef, the boiled mutton, the potatoes, the pies, the puddings, or the thousand-and-one substantials and delicacies to which he has been accustomed. Such is tavern life in Mexico, at least at a majority of the *mesones* and *fondas* scattered through the smaller towns and cities. What the charge is for the lodging of a man and the stabling of his beast over night, I do not know—the Mexican government paid all my bills of this nature during the interesting tour I made through that country. The prices are moderate, however, especially away from the larger cities. A dish of frijoles, or of guisado, with a stack of some half dozen tortillas to match, seldom costs more than six or nine cents; and as upon these the traveller is generally obliged to subsist, his expenses are light. With a dollar and twenty-five cents or thereabout per diem, I should suppose a man could pay his own expenses and those of his beast on the principal routes of the country, and live through it, unless some of *los senores ladrones* should see fit to stop his breath for the mere love of whatever plunder might be got from him.

Should the traveller happen to be at a village where there is no meson, it is considered the duty of the alcalde to furnish him with accommodations; but if night overtakes him at a poor rancho, where there is no alcalde, his situation is truly deplorable. He alights at the door of the best-appearing hut in the group, and after kicking and quieting some half dozen yelping, worthless curs, which seem inclined to dispute his passage by threats only—they never go so far as to bite—he at length effects an entrance. The room serves for all purposes—kitchen, parlour, and sleeping apartment.\*

\* The reader must bear in mind that I am now speaking of the dwellings of the very lowest and poorest classes, although a large majority of the inhabitants have but a common room in which to eat and sleep. Attached to this apartment, in many instances, may be found a small room which serves as a kitchen, and in which the little cooking of the family is done. In this kitchen the tortillas are made, and as the process may not prove uninteresting, I will quote Madame Calderon's description of the manner in which they are manufactured:—"They first soak the grain in water with a little lime, and when it is soft peel



There is no floor other than the hard-trodden earth; it is bedless, furnitureless, comfortless. The tired way-farer looks around for some friendly evidence of food and rest—his beast without neighs aloud for corn, shelter, and some one to relieve him of his heavy load of saddle and baggage. Upon the rough walls of the room are to be seen, neatly enough arrayed with garlands of flowers and boughs, a collection of badly-executed lithographs, gaudily coloured, and intended to represent different scenes in the life of our Saviour and the Holy Mother. The centre of the little group is occupied, perhaps, by a rude wooden cross, trimmed with faded flowers. Beneath is probably a lithograph—sometimes an old engraving—of the Virgin of Guadalupe, while over it is suspended a picture representing the ascension of our Saviour. The crucifixion occupies a conspicuous place, then a print of the Virgin and Holy Child, and then an ingeniously-wrought crown of thorns, or a rosary and crucifix. A brass medal of Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe, and probably a lithograph of the patron saint of the country, will be seen in the collection, the former suspended by a red or yellow ribband. A little bit of looking-glass generally completes the arrangement, for this piece of worldly vanity almost always has its station, in a Mexican cottage, in close proximity with the rude symbols of the faith of its inmates. On other parts of the walls the traveller sees little save strings of dry red peppers, perhaps a

off the skin—then grind it on a large block of stone, the *metate*, or, as the Indians (who know best) call it, the *metatl*. For the purpose of grinding it, they use a sort of stone roller, with which it is crushed, and rolled into a bowl placed below the stone. They then take some of this paste, and clap it between their hands, till they form it into light round cakes, which are afterward toasted on a smooth plate, called the *comalli* (*comal* they called it in Mexico), and which ought to be eaten as hot as possible." I agree, most decidedly, with the fair authoress, that they "ought to be eaten as hot as possible," *if at all*—for from all such tough, heavy, and unsavoury cakes I beg to be delivered. Most excellent bread do the Mexicans make—white, light, and sweet—and why they spoil their corn by converting it into tortillas is a mystery. Two women or girls are always engaged in making them—one to grind the grain, the other to form the cakes—and pass by a hut, either at night or morning, the traveller is sure to hear the patting of hands which denotes the progress of manufacture. When cooked, if the Mexican has no frijoles, he besmears the tortilla with a composition of red pepper and mutton fat, and always appears perfectly contented if he can procure a sufficiency of this singular food, with *pulque* enough to wash it down.



few ears of corn, and the coarse earthen bowls and dishes of the occupants. ~~There~~

Turning his eyes to the floor, in one corner he sees the universal *metate*, or stone instrument upon which the corn is mashed or ground before it is made into tortillas. In the next corner, probably, a fighting cock is tied by the leg, giving an occasional crow of defiance to some brother chicken tied in the same way in the adjoining or opposite house. Another corner is occupied, perhaps, by an elderly hen sitting upon a nest of eggs, while in the last stands a coarse box or chest, containing the little odds and ends belonging to the family in the way of dresses and ornaments. In this room, which is not more than ten or twelve feet square, live, sleep, and eat some eight, ten, or perhaps twelve persons, large and small, male and female, and with these the traveller is obliged to make his bed, or take up with lodgings upon the ground outside, which is every way preferable if the weather permits. "If a man lies down with a dog he gets up with fleas," says the old proverb—if he lies down with Mexicans of the lower classes he gets up with something worse, say I.

But sleep is a secondary, an after consideration—the wayfarer must have something to eat. He asks the master of the establishment if he has any meat. Nine times out of ten the answer is, "*No hai*"—there is none—accompanied by raising the right hand to a level with his nose, closing it with the exception of the forefinger, and then, with the palm turned outwardly, wagging the upraised finger directly before the face. Bread is next asked for. The answer this time is another wag of the forefinger, which is to all intents and purposes a negative; but frequently the word "*tampoco*" is uttered, signifying that there is neither bread nor meat on the premises. The traveller asks for milk or eggs. "*No hai uada*"—no, there is nothing here—is the answer, unless, by some turn of good fortune, his host happens to own a goat or a cow, or has had extraordinary luck with his poultry. It is only when the hungry wayfarer is driven to the strait of asking for tortillas or frijoles that the welcome "*si hai*"—we have them—greet his ear. With these he at least stays the cravings of hunger, and after having made such provision for his horse as the poverty of the rancho allows, he gathers his property as nearly under him as possible, rolls himself in his sarape, and seeks forgetfulness and rest in sleep.



The above is a picture of life in Mexico, among the lower classes of the inhabitants, the fidelity of which will be attested by all who have travelled over the country. Flying tourists, who have confined their trip to Puebla, Mexico, Queretaro, Guanajuato, and such places as they could reach in stage-coaches, can learn little from their own personal experience; for with the introduction of this mode of travelling came regular stage-houses, where regular and more bountiful meals are served up. They must journey upon the backs of mules, and through the less-frequented highways, before they can come to a proper understanding of the country and the modes of living of its inhabitants.



## CHAPTER XXVI.

**Departure from Salina.—Last Speech of the Kentucky Circus Proprietor.—Arrival at Espiritu Santo.—La Parada.—The Organo.—First Sight of San Luis Potosí.—Arrival within the City.—Beauty of the Women.—Description of San Luis.—Its Churches, Convents, and public Buildings.—Convent of the Augustine Friars.—Benevolence of the Brotherhood.—Market Scenes.—“Old Hundred” in San Luis.—Our Yankee Wag and his Stories.—Subscription for the Prisoners raised.—An interesting Scotch Lady.—Departure from San Luis.—A new Guard and new Commander.—Las Pilas.—Arrival at El Jaral.—Anecdote of General Mina.—A singular Funeral Procession.—A “Hog on Horseback.”—Description of the Arrieros of Mexico.**

As we were about departing from Salina, the Kentucky circus proprietor rode up to take his leave of us. Just as he was turning his horse's head, in the direction of Zacatecas, Roblado passed by on a gallop, the Kentuckian simply remarking that he would like to have him, and six more just like him, in a close room for about ten minutes, the door to be locked on the outside, and the windows strongly barred. He entertained what he called a private opinion, but which he expressed publicly, that the whole of them would “find themselves most essentially chewed up” in less than that time. After uttering this short but emphatic speech, he too put spurs to his horse and galloped off in an opposite direction. I have little doubt that such odds as even seven Roblados would have feared badly in his hands, for the Kentuckian was a well-made, stalwart specimen of our Western men, and had that determined expression of countenance which plainly indicated that he meant what he said.

In the afternoon we reached Espiritu Santo, a noble hacienda, having a fine church and a very well-informed and gentlemanly priest. Here, too, we met with a good blacksmith, and as the road beyond was reported to be exceedingly rough and rocky, several of our party embraced the opportunity of hav-



ing their animals shod. Fortunate it was that we did so, for we found the road even worse than had been represented.

Our night at Espiritu Santo was one of the most pleasant on the whole route. A Mexican gentleman residing there had two or three very pretty daughters, girls who had been educated in Europe and seen much of the world, and there were also several well-informed and intelligent ladies attached to the priest's family. At night a *tertulia*, or party, was given to the Mexican officers by the former, to which a number of the Texans were invited. One of the young ladies, in particular, waltzed gracefully, and played upon the guitar with excellent skill. A generous supper was given during the evening, and thus, amid music and the dance, feasting, and the charms of well-bred society, the night wore away at Espiritu Santo—the next we passed in miserable quarters at the poor and worn-out hacienda of La Parada. Surely, the hours of our captivity were checkered.

The country between La Parada and San Luis Potosi is wild, mountainous, and exceedingly picturesque. Often the traveller finds himself winding along through deep, dark, and dreary barrancas, or mountain passes, surrounded on all sides by high and rugged precipices. Many of these passes are not more than twenty or thirty yards in width, having pure streams of swift-running water dashing through them, and enlivened here and there by the rude mud dwelling of some family that has chosen the secluded retreat for a home. On either side the mountains rise in abrupt and precipitous masses, shutting out the sun almost entirely except for an hour or two in the middle of the day. Wild flowers of almost every variety and hue, sending forth delicious fragrance upon the pure mountain air, are to be seen on every side; orange and other fruit trees grow luxuriantly, and in one of these passes we for the first time met with the tall and symmetrical *organo* plant, a species of the cactus. It is about six inches in diameter at the base, tapering upward very gradually, from eighteen to twenty-five feet in height, and almost entirely destitute of limbs or leaves. As it is an evergreen, and grows perfectly straight, it is in many parts of Mexico planted closely in rows, and when it attains its full size and height makes a neat and strong fence—as symmetrical in every particular as though the hand of man had fashioned it. This singular production of nature receives its name from the resemblance a row of the trees has to the pipes of an organ. The prickly



pear was also seen growing upon the almost perpendicular mountain sides, and here goats, and ragged, rough-coated donkeys were picking a scanty subsistence from the thorny herbage. The climate in these mountain passes, for they scarcely deserve the name of valleys, is delightfully mild, and the limited wants of the scattered inhabitants are easily supplied by the vegetables that grow upon a few square rods of land. Ignorant of the wide world from which they are shut out, its cares and its vanities, the poor Indians here pass their days in peace and quietness, and in apparent unconsciousness of the wild sublimity with which they are surrounded.

Emerging from one of these passes, the traveller finds himself climbing the rocky side of precipices that at first sight seem impassable. By slow degrees the mountain summit is reached, and then he is amply repaid for his toil by the scenes below him—scenes full of calm repose and quiet beauty, for distance has softened the harshness of the rugged barranca and subdued the asperities of the wild precipices by which it is hemmed in. Our wagons with the sick had been sent by a different road, it being utterly impossible for aught save man or beast to make the passage through these mountain gorges.

After toiling some six hours in gaining as many miles, we finally reached the summit of the mountains which overhang the beautiful valley of San Luis on its northern side. In our rear was a rude and broken country—a country formed by nature in one of her wildest freaks—before us was spread out a boundless and peaceful valley. In the distance the numerous domes and steeples of San Luis Potosi were seen rising, while all around were rich and fertile fields teeming with vegetation, and this, too in the month of January. Innumerable well-sweeps were seen rising and falling in every part of the valley, for here there are no irrigating canals, and the inhabitants are compelled to depend on wells for water to moisten the earth.

Descending the mountains by a rough, zigzag path, in many places so steep that we were obliged to dismount and lead or drive our animals, we at length gained the valley in safety. Here we found a wide, straight road, skirted, on both sides, by huge prickly pear-trees, and leading directly into the city, now distant some six or seven miles. Those who have never seen the prickly pear as it grows in Mexico can hardly



believe accounts of the immense size which it attains. I have seen the trunks of some at least two feet in diameter, growing eight or ten feet in height without a limb, and then branching off in every direction. As we drew nearer the city, the roadsides were planted with rows of Peruvian trees, a species of pepper or spice, their wide-spreading limbs and rich green foliage forming a shady arbour over our pathway, while pendant clusters of red berries, of aromatic fragrance, were hanging gracefully from every twig and bough. Here and there a dwelling-house would be seen, the front yard fenced in by the towering *organo*, which completely cut off all view of the habitation save through the vacant space left in front for an entrance.

The self-important Roblado had sent on his trumpeters, as usual, to herald our approach, and the principal streets through which we passed were thronged with dense masses of the inhabitants. San Luis is one of the best-built cities of Mexico, regularly laid out, and with an air of cleanliness not common in a Mexican town. The women, too, are somewhat famous for their general beauty—they certainly have small and perfectly formed feet and hands, large and lustrous eyes, and hair more black and glossy than any other females I saw while travelling almost three thousand miles through the country. The windows and balconies of the better houses were filled with the fashionables, while the girls of the poorer classes, who seemed as though they had run from their houses half dressed in their great haste to see *los Tejanos*, were gathered on either side the streets in countless numbers.

The city of San Luis Potosi, with its immediate suburbs, must contain some fifty thousand inhabitants. Like Mexico, it is built in a wide valley, much of which is fertile in the growth of Indian corn and wheat, besides affording excellent pasturage for immense herds of sheep. The city was a place of great wealth while the adjacent gold mines were productive; but since the working of them has ceased it has lost much of its former consequence. The inhabitants, however, appear to be engaged to no inconsiderable extent in the manufacture of clothing, shoes, hats, and different other articles of iron, and a quantity of grain is raised in the valley far exceeding the wants of the population. The churches, convents, and public institutions are magnificent, and will vie with those of



any city in Mexico—a country abounding with the grandest specimens of religious architecture.

Passing through the principal plaza of the city, which is surrounded by stately churches, palaces, and residences of the higher orders, we at length reached the convent of the Augustine friars. This is a rich establishment, and the holy and benevolent brotherhood kindly appropriated two or three large rooms in their convent to our use. Here our sick were attended to, visited by Mexican physicians, and several of those who were in the most hopeless condition were taken to the hospital to be better attended. How different this from the unkind treatment we had experienced but a few days previous at Zacatecas!

No sooner had dark set in than Van Ness, who had no little influence with the Mexican officers, from the fact of his speaking their language, obtained permission to leave the convent without a guard, accompanied by one of the Texan officers and myself. First ascertaining the name of the street in which our quarters were situated, we strolled off at random into the heart of the city. A walk of but a few squares brought us to the market, which was now filled with the vendors of every species of eatable, drinkable, and wearable article. Seated upon the ground, a female might be seen with a few chiles colorados, or red peppers, for sale, her merchandise dimly lighted by a small fire beside her. But a few steps distant another woman, with a scanty supply of frijoles, would be quietly awaiting a customer, and her next neighbour was probably sitting by the side of an earthen pot of chile guisado, kept hot by a small charcoal fire beneath. In her lap would be a small pile of tortillas, and ever and anon, as some hungry customer gave her a call, she would throw two or three of the tortillas upon the fire to warm, dip a saucer of the guisado from the pot before her, and after receiving her *quartillo* in advance, hand over the eatables to the purchaser. The *quartillo* is a copper coin about the size of one of our pennies, but passes for three. There is a small portion of silver in the Mexican copper coins—just enough to make it an object to counterfeit them—and it is said that large quantities of spurious *quartillos* have been manufactured in the United States and in England expressly for the Mexican market.

The market-place of San Luis occupies a large square, and



every part of it was in some way put to use by the females. Twenty-five cents would have purchased the whole stock in trade of a large portion of them ; yet they seemed perfectly happy, and would chat away, while smoking their cigarritos, with the greatest vivacity and cheerfulness. There may not have been as many languages spoken as in the New-Orleans market, but there was as much talking, and even more bustle and confusion. The square was filled with soldiers off duty, loafers, market-women, girls, monks, gamblers, léperos, vendors of oranges, and other fruits, robbers, friars, fellows with fighting chickens under their blankets—in short, one of those miscellaneous collections always to be found about a Mexican market square. The adjoining buildings were occupied as drinking and cigar shops, retail fancy stores, and dwelling-houses of the poorer orders. Around the liquor shops were seen a few drunken Indians, the husbands or brothers, probably, of some of the market-women, who had spent one half of their hard earnings in the purchase of mescal or aguardiente.

Entering an *estanquillo*, or shop licensed to sell cigars, we met two or three faces so decidedly Anglo-Saxon in complexion and feature that we at once accosted them in English, and were answered by one of the party with a drawl and twang so peculiar “Down East,” that Marble, Hackett, or Yankee Hill might have taken lessons from him. We soon ascertained that they belonged to the American circus company then performing at San Luis, and on telling them who we were, they at once invited us to their *meson* to supper. The first speaker, who proved to be a regular Vermonter, was not a little surprised to see us out without a guard, and asked if we had received permission to that effect. His astonishment was removed when we told him that we were allowed to leave our quarters on parole.

In five minutes after our arrival at the hotel of the equestrians, I found that our Vermont acquaintance was one of the quaintest specimens of the Yankee race I had ever seen, and not a few examples had I met previous to my encounter with him. He had a droll impediment in his speech which gave to his actions and gestures a turn irresistibly comic, and then he told an excellent story, played the trombone, triangle, and bass viol, spoke Spanish well, drove one of the circus wagons, translated the bills, turned an occasional somerset in the ring, cracked jokes in Spanish with the Mexican clown, took



the tickets at the entrance with one hand, while with the other he beat an accompaniment to the orchestra inside on the bass-drum, and, in short, made himself "generally useful." After partaking of an excellent supper, we spent an agreeable hour in his room, listening to story after story at his adventures. He "come out" to Mexico, to use his own words, by way of Chihuahua, accompanying the traders from Jonesborough, on Red River, in the first and only expedition across the immense prairies. They were some six or eight months on the road, and suffered incredible hardships for want of water and provisions. Our Yankee was a stout man when we saw him, but he told us that he was a perfect transparency when he first arrived at the Mexican settlements—so poor, in fact, that according to his own account "a person might have read the New-England Primer through him without specs."

When ten o'clock came we rose to depart; but the droll genius insisted that we should first partake of glass of egg-nog with him, and then help him to sing "Old Hundred" in remembrance of old times. There are few persons in the New-England States who cannot go through this ancient and well-known psalm-tune after some fashion, and although neither time nor place was exactly befitting, we all happened to be from that quarter, and could not resist complying with his comico-serious request. He really had a good voice, and, for aught I know, may have led the singing in his native village church. After humming a little, apparently to get the right pitch, he started off with a full, rich tone; but suddenly checking himself in the middle of the first line, said that the thing was not yet complete. Taking a double-bass from its resting-place in one corner of the room, he soon had the instrument tuned, and then re-commenced with this accompaniment. Never have I heard a performance so strangely mingling the grave and the comic. It was odd enough to see one of his vocation in a strange land thus engaged—and then the solemnity and zeal with which he sawed and sang away were perfectly irresistible. I did not laugh; but thoughts arose in my mind very little accordant with the earnest and devotional spirit with which our strange companion went through his share of the performance. This curious scene over, a scene which is probably without a parallel in the history of San Luis Potosi, we took leave of our singular acquaintance, who promised to call at the convent early the



next morning, and do everything in his power to assist those among the Texans who were the most destitute.

During the forenoon of the day which followed this strange night adventure, we were visited at the convent by a large number of foreigners—Scotch, Irish, English, German, French, and American. Our Yankee acquaintance also made his appearance, with several of his companions, and for an hour or two the old cloisters fairly rang with laughter at his merry jokes. The mad wag had an inexhaustible fund of humorous anecdote, and one great charm about his jokes was, that while his hearers' sides were shaking at their recital, his own face was as solemn as that of any of the Yucatan idols which grace the volumes of Stephens or Norman. A faint twinkle of humour, enough to show that he felt the full comic force of his story, might be seen lurking about the corners of his eyes; but farther than this he did not indulge in outward expressions of mirth.

Among those who visited our quarters during the day were several of the wealthiest foreign merchants of the place. As Colonel Cooke's party had not taken San Luis in their route there had been no call upon their charity, and they immediately set about raising a handsome subscription of money and clothing for the more destitute among the prisoners. It was laughable to see some of the latter, who had for months been arrayed only in rags, now suddenly transformed into shabby-genteel dandies by the timely assistance of a suit of fashionable, although second-hand garments.

At night a small party of us were again permitted to visit the town without a guard, and the next day the commandante of San Luis permitted all the Texan officers to ramble about the town on their parole. In the forenoon I visited a very gentlemanly Scotch merchant of the place, and was introduced to his lady. She, too, was a native of Scotland, but had been many years a resident of San Luis, and was very affable and lady-like in her deportment. She was also very liberal in her gifts to the prisoners—especially to such of them as were her countrymen.

A performance was given in the afternoon by the equestrians, the large arena in which the bull-fights take place having been neatly fitted up by the company. To this performance we were all invited, and some eight or ten accepted the invitation. We found the arena tolerably well filled with the better classes of the place, and among the audience were many extremely



well-dressed ladies. They wore not a little jewellery, and many of them had rich and showy mantillas; but by far the greatest charm about them was their large, liquid, black eyes, so full of deep and impassioned feeling. The riding of the American equestrians appeared to be new to the audience, and was greeted with repeated shouts of applause, while the antics, eccentricities, and jokes of the Mexican clown, all of which had been drilled into him by the wag of a Yankee who managed the concern, proved highly diverting to the crowd of ragged urchins in attendance.

A small party of us had received an invitation to supper that evening, with a German who had lived in Texas and who spoke English, and while seeking his dwelling we accidentally entered the house of another German, who was one of the wealthiest merchants of the place, and lived in a style of great splendour. Some five or six of us found ourselves suddenly in a richly-furnished drawing-room, in which were seated several Mexican ladies. They manifested not the least constraint, but invited us to be seated at once, and entered into conversation with such of our party as could speak the Spanish. The master of the house, too, politely invited us to take wine with him, and although we did not see the gentleman, whose invitation we had accepted, in the room, there was nothing in the deportment of those present to denote that we were unwelcome or even uninvited guests. After we had spent some half an hour in this way, the real individual of whose hospitality we had intended to partake arrived in search of us, and then for the first time we discovered our mistake. After a profusion of apologies on our part, which were deemed entirely unnecessary by the parties upon whom we had thus unceremoniously intruded, we took our leave, but not until we had been urged to take another glass of wine. Even the ladies joined in saying that all apologies were unnecessary, and fairly laughed the thing off as a most excellent joke.

Arrived at length at the house for which our visit was intended, we there found an excellent supper and wines of the choicest description waiting for us. After passing a couple of hours in their discussion, and in speculation as to what disposition the Mexican government would make of us after our arrival at the capital, we returned to our quarters in the convent. Here we ascertained that we were to renew our march the next morning, and as I found Falconer, who had



not been allowed to leave the convent, busily employed in writing letters, I embraced the opportunity again to address Mr. Ellis, then our minister at Mexico. I also wrote numerous letters to my friends in the United States, all of which, through the assistance of the friend who took charge of them, arrived in safety.

It was on the morning of the 12th of January that we took our departure from San Luis Potosi, leaving six or seven of our sick in the hospital—men who were down with the small-pox and other diseases, and utterly unable to travel. A large supply of clothing was distributed among the more destitute the evening before, and also a small sum of money to each man—contributions which had been raised principally among the liberal foreign residents.

Roblado, much to the satisfaction of the prisoners, left us at San Luis. Among our unfortunate men he had obtained the cognomen of "Salezar the Second," and by his acts of petty tyranny and cruelty to such as were on foot, had doubtless well earned the title. Our new guard was composed entirely of cavalry, whose commander was a polite and gentlemanly person, disposed to grant us every favour and indulgence. I have forgotten the name of this officer, but he had been a prisoner himself in Texas, and frequently spoke of the excellent treatment he received while in that country. An incident extremely interesting occurred when he first appeared among us. It seems that at the retreat, after the battle of San Jacinto, this officer was wounded in the chase, captured by a Texan, and afterward quartered by him at the house of a gentleman, who dressed his wound and bestowed upon him every attention. In the person of Lieutenant Casey, one of our officers, he immediately recognised his former captor and benefactor, and the nature of the meeting between them it is easier to imagine than describe.

Passing through a fertile and settled country, the fields many of them fenced in with the organo and prickly pear, we reached the hacienda of Las Pilas early in the afternoon, and halted there for the night. I recollect but little of this place, other than that I hired a very pretty girl to wash a shirt and handkerchief. The next day we continued our journey through the beautiful valley of San Francisco, one of the most fertile in Mexico. On the 14th of January we arrived at El Jaral, the celebrated residence of the count of that name, who is deemed one of the wealthiest proprietors



in all Mexico. The town, which is owned by Jaral, has a fine church, and an immense slaughter-house, where about a thousand sheep and goats are said to be killed daily for their hides and tallow alone. The residence of the count himself is a large and imposing building, although destitute of architectural beauty.\* The dwellings of his peons, or labourers, and there are some two thousand of them, are mostly rude adobe huts, destitute of furniture and every comfort. You may call them by what you will—Mexican citizens, freemen, or what not—many of them are to all intents slaves—serfs, subject to the will and pleasure of the lord of the immense manor.

We had proceeded but a short distance from El Jaral when we encountered a singularly grave, and, at the same time, ludicrous procession. Borne on the shoulders of four men came first a litter, on which a corpse was lying. This was decorated with flowers of different species, and the bearers were carrying it to El Jaral for interment. Not a creature, save the four men who bore the litter, was attached to this singular funeral possession, but immediately in the rear, and as if enjoying such protection as it afforded, was a female driving a little scrubby, half-starved donkey in the same direction. Upon the back of the ass, with his head turned toward the animal's tail, a large and extremely fat live hog was riding—the first of the swinish race I had ever seen mounted. His four legs were confined, two on either side of the animal which was bearing him along; and the hog was ever and anon changing the position of his head from one side to the other, in order, apparently, to take the greatest possible comfort under the circumstances. I cannot say that his equestrian performance was altogether as graceful as some I have seen, or that he had that dauntless bearing which gives to feats of horsemanship their greatest charm; but he certainly manifested a resignation and stoical indifference which could hardly have been expected, and we laughed outright as the dwarfish donkey, with his whimsical rider, trotted passed us, chief mourner,

\* Ward, in his useful work upon Mexico, says that the live stock owned by the Marquis del Jaral at one time numbered three millions, including horses, mules, horned cattle, sheep, and goats. The famous General Mina, with his small but gallant force of Americans, took this town in 1817, and, according to the statement of the proprietor, robbed him of 300,000 dollars in specie.



as one of our men remarked, for the person borne upon the litter. I have often heard of a "hog in armour," but never expected to see a hog on horseback.

It is singular enough, and a matter which strikes every traveller with wonder who journeys through Mexico, with what facility the *arrieros*, or muleteers, can confine almost any burden upon the backs of asses and mules. Frequently we met moving fodder-stacks along the road—many of them nearly the size of a common load of hay—and as no living thing could be seen about them, their appearance at first struck us as curious in the extreme. Large bodies of wheat-straw, square and compact, and reaching within an inch of the ground, could be seen approaching us, and it was only when we bent close to the earth that their locomotive power could be seen. By looking in this position the four feet of the animal beneath the stack could be discovered—head, body, ears, and all being alike concealed under the bulky load which was packed, with the greatest regard to symmetry, upon his back. Almost the entire transportation business of the country is carried on in this way, and the traveller sees boxes, bales, barrels—in short, every species of merchandise—carried from one point to another securely packed upon the backs of mules and asses.

The *arrieros* of Mexico are the most hardy, brave, generous, and trustworthy of her inhabitants—a class of men in whom the utmost reliance can be placed, and whose calling, requiring them to be constantly roaming from point to point and mixing with the world, supplies them with a fund of anecdote and the legendary lore of the country, and renders them well-informed and exceedingly entertaining companions. From what I saw and heard of them they are universally to be trusted with any charge, and their word may invariably be depended upon—which is a good deal more than can be said of any other class, as a body, in Mexico, whether civil, military, or ecclesiastical.

The dress of the *arriero* is a pair of green or blue broad-cloth pantaloons, foxed or trimmed with velvet or morocco, and slashed from the knee downward, while the sides are ornamented with a profusion of bright bell-buttons. Under these he wears flowing linen drawers, and both are confined around the waist by a gay sash. The bosom of the shirt is often elaborately worked, and over this a close-fitting jacket, decorated with a large quantity of bell-buttons and



braid, is worn. Attached to his heels are an immense pair of iron or steel spurs, the rowel of a circumference equal to the palm of his hand, and having little steel ornaments at the sides, which tinkle at every step. A wide-brimmed hat, partially pointed at the top, covered with oil silk, and around which gold or silver braid and tassels are confined, sits jauntily upon the head; and thus equipped, and mounted upon his richly-caparisoned horse or mule, the Mexican muleteer is one of the most picturesque, as well as showy horseman in the world.

The stock in trade of the *arriero* consists of as many mules as he has money to purchase, with an *aparejo* for each. The latter is nothing more than a heavy, clumsy pack-saddle, confined to the mule's back by a hair-girth, and kept from slipping too forward by a wide crupper, which is frequently embroidered, and has the name either of the mule or his master, or, perhaps, a couplet of poetry or some old Spanish proverb applicable to the calling of the *arriero*, worked with thread upon its sides.\* At night, the mules are formed in line and unpacked, and then either driven to pasture fed, or at the corral attached to the meson. In the morning, the animals walk directly up to their saddles, and there stand patiently until packed. Not unfrequently does it occur that each mule knows his own particular *aparejo*, and unerringly picks it out from a hundred ranged in a row; should one of them, more stupid or careless than his fellows, chance to take his stand in front of another's saddle and load, the real owner soon convinces him of his mistake by a shower of well-directed kicks; and as if all felt it a duty to punish stupidity, the unfortunate animal generally has a dozen pairs of heels flying at him before he finds his own *aparejo*.

The work of packing, when, as I have before stated, boxes, bales, barrels, and every species of merchandise are thus transported in Mexico, occupies an incredibly short time, the *arriero* superintending his *mozos*, or servants, and directing them how and upon what mules to pack the heavier articles. When all is in readiness for the journey, he leads the procession, followed by some more steady and aged mule, which is looked upon by his followers

\* On the crupper of a pack mule I remember reading the following: "*Between women and wine the poor arriero gets nothing.*"



as the bell-wether of the gang. So tightly drawn are the girths, that the animals are not only galled, but frequently find much difficulty in breathing, and in the early part of a day's journey manifest not a little pain and uneasiness by tossing aloft their heads, and giving utterance to loud grunts or groans; yet it is deemed impossible to fasten their loads securely without thus torturing them, their backs and sides, when unladen at night, giving painful evidence of their sufferings during the day. When on the road not one of them can be coaxed or beaten into passing their leader, and when he comes to a halt they also stop until he moves again. Whenever anything breaks, or a pack becomes loose, the mozo is at hand with a blind to place over the mule's eyes, and a piece of raw-hide in his pocket to repair damages. Thus the whole business is reduced to a system.

Such is the arriero of Mexico, and such he will continue to be until the mountains of his country are cut down, and the steep, craggy, and difficult paths are turned into beaten and open thoroughfares. He looks to the interest of those who employ him with scrupulous care; takes every precaution to guard the goods intrusted to his charge from being either stolen or damaged. He has a nod and a sly wink for every pretty girl he meets in his many miles of travel, can carol every rude madrigal known in the land, loves his honour and his religion, hates the ladrones and léperos, and despises lying and deceit. Would that all the inhabitants of Mexico were arrieros, or as honest as are these roving landsmen.



## CHAPTER XXVII.

**A Night at San Felipe.—Santa Anna.—San Juan de los Llanos.—Tedious Mountain March.—Arparos; its romantic situation.—Arrival at Silao.—Approach to Guanajuato.—Departure from Guanajuato.—Singular Location of the City.—La Puerta.—Arrival at Salamanca.—Celaya.—Sunday at Celaya.—The Cathedral.—Singular Customs of the Indians.—“El Campanero de San Pablo.”—A Spanish Play.—Lady Smokers.—Departure from Celaya.—Fertility of the Baxio.—Calera.—A Stroll through Queretaro.—Spanish System of Shaving.—Texans Stoned in the Market-place.—A Mexican Restaurant.—Adventure with a Friar.**

The night following our departure from El Jaral we passed at San Felipe, the second town taken by Hidalgo in the early part of the Mexican Revolution. At that time it was said to contain sixteen thousand inhabitants; there are not half that number now, unless I am much deceived. At this place several of our party were treated with much attention by a Mexican gentleman, who had been one of Mina's soldiers. Of Santa Anna and his ambitious projects he was far from speaking in complimentary terms: but this was the case among all classes. From the best bred gentleman down to the lowest lépero, all were loud in their curses of the despot and his schemes, and the question was often asked our men why they did not kill him when he was in their power!

On our next day's journey we passed a small rancho known as La Lorn, and at night reached the once wealthy but now insignificant hacienda of San Juan de los Llanos, or St. John of the Plains. By this time, although all of us had set out from San Luis in good health, several of our party were down with the small pox, and suffering incredibly from being compelled to travel, and from want of proper medicines. There was no way of leaving them behind, however, and the poor fellows were carried along in



the wagons furnished at Zacatecas, receiving such attentions as it was in the power of their companions to bestow.

After an exceedingly long and tiresome mountain march, through deep and ragged barrancas and up steep and rugged precipices, such of us as were on foot or had animals reached the little mountain rancho of Arparos late on the afternoon of the 17th of January. The wagons were taken by some round-about and more level road, and did not join us until late at night; yet even they had been several times upset, and were much shattered by the roughness of the journey. The little adobe church at this rancho was cleared of its holy furniture to accommodate some of our party, while three or four of us hired a room of one of the villagers in which to pass the night.

Nothing can exceed the grandeur and picturesque beauty of the site which has been chosen for the little rancho of Arparos. The road to it, in both directions, leads through rugged mountain gorges and across swift-running streams—now climbing steep acclivities, and then descending into deep and secluded barrancas—dark and dreary except when the sun is at his meridian. The prickly pear, or nopal, here attains much perfection, but other than this there is scarcely a blade of vegetation save here and there a small patch of corn, found in some little valley where the wash from the surrounding mountains has formed a soil.

The next day we reached Silao, a town containing some four or five thousand inhabitants, and situated in a fertile plain. Here we met an American physician, and an English gentleman to whose house a small party of us were invited to supper. He was a resident of Guanajuato, and a very influential man in that city; but during a portion of the year he made Silao his residence on account of the superior salubrity of its climate. We found his wife, who was an English lady, a kind-hearted, interesting woman, disposed to render every attention to such of our party as were ill with the small-pox, and there were now some twelve or fifteen on the list. She sent them a large quantity of hot tea and such other necessaries as she thought they would stand most in need of, while her husband said that he would leave for Guanajuato early the next morning, and use all his influence with the authorities to induce them to allow such as were really unable to travel permission to remain at the hospital in that city.



By making an early start on the morning of the 19th, we were enabled to reach Guanajuato before the middle of the day. Our approach and entry into that city were characterised by one of the most laughable exhibitions that occurred on the whole route from San Miguel to Mexico. It is almost impossible so to describe the scene as to give it full effect, but I shall make the attempt.

When within some five miles of Guanajuato numerous market-men were encountered, driving before them the donkeys that had borne their produce to the city. As many of our men were foot-sore from the tedious mountain march of the previous day, the officer who had charge of us immediately pressed the animals into service, and told the Texans to mount them. It was in vain the owners of the animals expostulated, and told our captain that they were in haste to return to their homes—he not only reiterated his order for our men to seize the unsuspecting donkeys by the ears, and mount them at once, but commanded their owners to assist in driving them. As we gradually approached the city the number of asses increased, and before we entered the suburbs every Texan was perched upon the back of a donkey, without saddle or bridle, and of such low stature were many of the animals, that their riders were fairly compelled to draw up their legs to keep their feet from dragging on the ground.

The whole scene was ludicrously rich, and afforded infinite amusement not only to the guard of dragoons who accompanied us, and the throngs of men and women gathered upon either side of the streets, but to the Texans themselves. In fact, all appeared to enjoy the comical appearance of our procession, save the donkeys and their unfortunate owners.

Shouts of every description rent the air as we thus journeyed along. “Here comes the Texas heavy light cavalry,” some fellow would cry aloud, and the next moment, perhaps, he would measure his length upon the ground by one of those peculiar pitches and kicks understood and practised only by animals of the donkey race. At every step some one of the animals would take it into his head to run away—his next neighbour, very likely, would at the same time make up his mind not to move at all; an obstinate whim which it is extremely difficult to beat out of a jackass. Shouts of laughter from the Texans would ensue as some one of the animals indulged in an extra freak of eccentricity, and mixed with



the laughter the muttered curses and deep imprecations of the owners could be distinctly heard. They were anxious to be relieved as soon as possible from this extra duty which had been imposed upon them, and accordingly pressed their overburdened animals along by those incentives a Mexican knows so well how to use. "Hip-ah! burro!"\* resounded on every side, accompanied by blows and kicks—"T'chew, tchew, tchew," an unmeaning sound, but used as an encouragement for the animals to move faster, was freely administered at every step.

When once within the city, among its dark and narrow streets, the services of the doukeys were dispensed with, and their unfortunate owners set off for their homes in no good-humour. We were then taken completely through Guana-juato, and finally lodged at the soldiers' barracks—clean and airy quarters. My description of our singular entry into one of the proudest and richest cities of Mexico falls short of the real scene itself—it is utterly impossible to draw a correct picture of a performance which not one of those who took a part in it, either as spectator or actor, can ever forget.

We had scarcely reached our quarters before we were visited by numerous foreigners—English, Irish, and American—who at once inquired into the wants of the prisoners, and promised to render every assistance. As was the case at San Luis Potosi, Colonel Cooke's party not having passed through the place, the foreign residents had not been called upon to contribute and render assistance to their countrymen in distress.

Accompanied by the Mexican physicians attached to the hospital, several of the foreign medical men examined such of our party as had the small-pox or other diseases, and permission was granted for eighteen of them to be taken immediately to the hospital, there to remain until their recovery, or till death should release them from their sufferings.

Among those more severely affected with the loathsome malady, now rapidly spreading among us, were Captain Caldwell and poor Fitzgerald. The latter was delirious when we placed him in the litter which bore him to the hospital, and strong fears were entertained that he would sink under the disease; but he recovered, and was shortly afterward liberated through the exertion of the British minister;

\* *Burro*—the Spanish name for a jackass.



he has since been re-taken by the Mexicans, and shot while heroically assisting his comrades to escape. Captain Caldwell also recovered from the small-pox, and was released by Santa Anna with the rest of the Texan prisoners, but, as I have before mentioned, has since died in Texas. Of the eighteen left at Guanajuato, five died and were buried at the place—the remainder were sent to Mexico on their recovery, and confined with their comrades at the Convent of Santiago. They described their treatment as extremely kind and attentive while in the hospital, and on their arrival at Mexico they were all well dressed.

An attempt was made by our foreign friends to induce the commandante to allow us to remain at Guanajuato one day; but as all the sick had been taken care of, and the governor was not in the city, he did not feel at liberty to grant the request. Finding themselves unable to delay our departure, our friends redoubled their exertions in obtaining contributions, and the next morning a large sum of money and a generous supply of clothing were distributed among our men. At no place on the route did the foreigners contribute with greater liberality to the relief of the unfortunate Texans than at Guanajuato, and among those most indefatigable in obtaining these necessities was the gentleman at whose house we had taken supper at Silao.

It was at Guanajuato that I first heard of the arrival, at the city of Mexico, of one of my associates in business, although the gentleman who gave me the information could not learn his name. Before I received this news I had half made up my mind to accept an offer made me to escape, an American gentleman I had met on the road suggesting a feasible plan, and proffering me every assistance. I was to be provided with a horse, a servant who spoke English, and a passport, and could take either the route to Tampico, or to Mazatlan, on the Pacific, the escape to be made at some town or rancho between Guanajuato and Queretaro. The gentleman appeared, according to promise, at the place appointed; but by this time I had heard of the arrival of my associate, and in addition to this I was allowed my parole by the officer then in charge of the prisoners. To run away under these circumstances would have involved an honourable officer in difficulty, and brought more rigorous treatment and closer confinement upon my companions; and taking these circumstances into consideration, I gave up all thoughts



of escaping. Had I anticipated the sickness and loathsome imprisonment yet in store for me, I should not have visited the city of Mexico, and should have saved the United States and Mexican governments reams of correspondence in relation to my humble self and case.

About ten o'clock on the morning of the 20th of January we took our departure from Guanajuato, our route conducting us through the same streets by which we had entered—I am not certain that there is any other outlet to the place. The city is built in a deep but narrow ravine, some two miles in length, while its greatest width is perhaps not more than three or four hundred yards. On either side high and precipitous mountains rise—so steep that the very goats can hardly find a road up their sides. There are but two or three main streets; but these run the whole length of the city, are very narrow, and the houses extremely high, so that a large population is congregated in the deep and dark barranca. A more singular site for a city probably does not exist in the wide world, and nothing induced the early settlers to select it but the fact that the surrounding mines were among the richest and most productive in the country.

After crossing, some twenty times, a little stream of water which runs through the principal street leading into the city, and after passing the suburbs, we began the ascent of the mountains at the only point where a road was practicable. A single turn shut the city we had just left completely from the sight, and I doubt whether there is more than one spot within half a mile from which even the highest of its numerous domes can be seen, so completely is Guanajuato hidden from the world.

At night we halted at La Puerta, where we slept, and the next afternoon we reached the city of Salamanca. This is a neat and tolerably well built place, containing several colleges, besides convents and churches. As we were leaving it the next morning, I had an opportunity of seeing a *volunteer* for the army *caught*. The man's crime I did not learn, nor in fact could I ascertain that he had committed any: be this as it may, he was seized and tied in front of the meson where we had passed the night, and dragged onward by two dragoons detailed for the especial purpose of preventing his escape. The fellow had a mother, who, with tears and prayers, begged the commander of the dragoons to release her son. The officer turned a deaf ear to her entreaties,



pushed her from him, and strode onward. With frantic shrieks the woman sprang after him, fell at his feet, and while clinging with convulsive grasp to his knees, besought him, in accents most piteous, to allow her son to remain with her. Again the officer threw the woman from him, and jumping upon his horse, was soon out of hearing. The last I saw of the mother she was flying about from one person to another, wringing her hands in the very phrensy of despair, and beseeching all to intercede in behalf of her boy. This in a republic which boasts of its freedom, and cannot issue the most trifling despatch without tacking "God and *liberty*" to some part of it!

In the afternoon of the 22d we reached Celaya, a neat and busy, but small city. The residence of General Cortazar, the gentlemanly and liberal governor of the State of Guanajuato, is at this place. From him and his officers, not only our party but that of Colonel Cooke, invariably received the best treatment; and even the common soldiers of our guard, while within the limits of Guanajuato, appeared to partake of the better qualities of the generous commandante and his officers.

Cortazar had us all quartered in a clean and airy convent, gave us the full liberty of the city on parole, and sent word that we might remain thirty-six hours in the place to rest and recruit ourselves. This favour was the more agreeable to us, as the following day was Sunday, and we thus had an opportunity of seeing the religious observances and public amusements by which this day is celebrated in a Mexican city.

At an early hour on Sunday morning a small party of us left the convent. Our first stopping-place was at a meson near the market square, where we partook of as good a breakfast as the tavern afforded. Our next movement was to the principal cathedral of Celaya, to observe the religious ceremonies of the morning. A party of Indians were in attendance, in addition to the regular worshippers, and the strange mingling of some of their own customs with the rites of the established Catholic Church, formed a picture of striking singularity. The early Spanish missionaries were never able entirely to eradicate the superstitious ceremonies of the original inhabitants, but by allowing them to ingraft some of their own rites upon Catholicism, they partially brought them over to their faith. This state of things still



continues, and the religion of a large portion of the mixed classes is to this day but a blending of whimsical and grotesque ceremonies with the solemn and imposing observances which appertain to the religion of the Romish Church.

After twelve o'clock the innumerable liquor shops of the city were thrown open, and in the afternoon cock-fighting commenced at the theatre. The pit seats were taken out for the purpose, and on visiting it we found a large assembly of gamblers, loafers, gentlemen, soldiers, and priests assembled to enjoy the sport. The Mexicans of all classes are passionately fond of it, and will frequently stake their all upon the result of a single fight.

The amusements of the cockpit over, the seats were replaced, and every preparation made for the production of "*El Campanero de San Pablo*"—the Bell-Ringer of St. Paul's—by a Spanish company of actors then playing at Celaya. This performance we also attended, and found the house well filled with many of the more fashionable families of the place, and among them that of General Cortazar. Ladies and all, as is the custom in a Mexican theatre, kept up an incessant smoking between the acts, and the rising of the curtain even was no signal for them to throw away their cigarritos. The drama was a translation from the French, but is founded on a story of the reign of Charles I. of England, and is extremely popular in Mexico. The actors were all perfect in their parts, but the play dragged heavily enough along to those who but imperfectly understood the language, and after seeing three acts of it, and inhaling cigar and candle smoke until we were half suffocated, we returned to our quarters. Thus did we spend our Sunday at Celaya.

On the next morning we took our departure from this hospitable town. As we were about starting, it was ascertained that young Curtis Caldwell had broken out with the small-pox.\* He was not more than fourteen years old, but an extremely intelligent and active lad for his age, and Cortazar had him taken to his own house and treated with every possible attention. On his recovery he was sent to his father at Guanajuato, and finally returned to Texas with him.

In the afternoon of the 24th we reached a miserable rancho

\* His father, it will be remembered, had been left at Guanajuato with the same disease.



called Calera. During the palmy days of Guanajuato, when the mines of that district yielded their richest treasures and employed immense numbers of men, the Baxio, or fertile valley in which Salamanca, Celaya, and innumerable rich haciendas are situated, found a ready market for the corn and wheat grown upon its surface ; but now that the demand has been in a great measure cut off, the estates are gradually sinking in value and going out of cultivation.

In one part of this valley—I think between Queretaro and San Juan del Rio—the traveller passes through an immense corn-field, or rather a succession of corn-fields, miles in extent, the produce of which supplies the neighbouring cities. During a march of nearly two days nothing could be seen on any side but stacks of Indian corn, the husks still on, and each stack surmounted with a rude wooden cross. The owners of the grain had taken the latter precaution, so it was told us, to prevent the ladrones from preying upon their property ; for it is said that nothing can induce the most hardened thief, in that country of petty pilferers, to touch aught which is thus guarded. Whether this is true or false is a point upon which I do not intend to decide ; if true, I can say that it is much the cheapest and safest method of preventing theft that could be devised in Mexico, and I would prefer having my property under the guardianship and protection of one wooden cross than of twenty armed men. Robert Macaire would have starved to death had his lot fallen among Mexican ladrones, and the noted “ Pony Club” of Georgia might have found valuable members by sending to Mexico.\*

Finding that he could procure no food for the prisoners at

\* The candidate for admission into this “ Club” was obliged to pass through the following ordeal successfully before he could receive his diploma, or certificate of membership. A committee of passed members conducted the tyro to a secluded place in the woods, placed a hat upon a stump or rock in a conspicuous position, and then arranged themselves around it in such situations that all could plainly see the hat. If the candidate was successful in stealing it, while all were watching, he was at once admitted into full communion and fellowship ; if not, he was dismissed with advice to practise still farther his “ slight-of hand” tricks, and by untiring industry endeavour better to qualify himself for the high station to which he aspired. So adroit is the veriest dunce among the Mexican thieves, that he could steal the hat from the very head of a sharp-sighted man without being detected, even if the latter had friends on the look-out to prevent it.



Calera, the officer who had charge of us determined upon an early start in the morning, with the intention of reaching Queretaro by breakfast-time. We were all in motion by two o'clock; and so raw and cold was the early morning air, that such of us as were mounted dashed onward at a brisk gallop, with the hope of thus obtaining warmth and a circulation of the blood. The days, at this time, were delightfully warm and pleasant, but the extreme height of the table-lands made the nights raw and chilly. To show how negligent were the dragoons who accompanied us as a guard, I may add that the little party with whom I made the morning ride did not see one of them from the time we set off until we had nearly reached the city gates.

We were but a short league from Queretaro when the sun rose—within sight of a city whose numerous public buildings and works, whose lofty and imposing domes, towers, and steeples, present to the view of the traveller, enter it from what quarter he may, a sight than which one more grand and magnificent can hardly be imagined. The city is in part encircled by lofty mountains, and as the rising sun first kissed their towering summits, the gray and sombre-shadowed town, lying far beneath them, was buried in profound repose. Anon, as the sun's rays came flashing from the mountain tops and lit up the higher domes of the place, the scene assumed an appearance of light and life. Soon the sun itself rose from behind those mountain barriers, and the whole city was at once aroused by its animating presence. To forget that morning's dawn and its effect upon Queretaro were impossible. Now a blushing ray would linger and play upon the loftiest peaks of the surrounding mountains; the next moment it would flash across the plain, dispel the deep shadows from the mountain sides, and gild some towering dome with a flood of light. To watch the bright beams reflected from tower to tower and from dome to dome—to see the dark shadows disappearing, as if chased from their retreats by the vivid flashes—and then to behold the entire city lit up as by enchantment—all combined to form a spectacle of almost inonceivable grandeur. The morning was now bright, beautiful, and balmy, and the stillness which surrounded us was only broken by the distant deep-toned bells calling the dwellers to mass, and that busy but undefinable hum which betokens the awakening of a great city to the labour of another day.



As the last straggling loiterers of our party came up, we were formed in regular order, and then marched through the city. Quarters had been procured for us at an old convent on the side of the city opposite to that by which we entered—a vile, dismal hole at the best—but our commandante said that no other could be obtained.

A circumstance of a very amusing nature occurred while the officer of our guard was absent at the house of the commandante, for the purpose of obtaining permission for us to roam about the city on parole. We had scarcely been ten minutes in the convent when we were visited by the usual crowd of venders of oranges and other fruits, women with tortillas, frijoles, and guisado, all anxious to dispose of their little stock in trade. Mr. Falconer picked out some half dozen oranges and sweet limes from the basket of a fruit-girl, and in payment handed her a dollar. There was not small coin enough among them all to change the dollar, and Falconer sent it out by a corporal, telling him to get it changed. The fellow shortly returned with *sixty-four cakes of soap*, tied up in a handkerchief. Falconer told the corporal he wanted *change* not *soap*. The corporal replied that it was the currency of the place—legal currency—and that there was no other. Such proved to be the case; and however singular it may appear, soap is really a lawful tender in the payment of all debts, and our companion was compelled to keep this singular substitute in the way of change for his dollar. He could not very well pocket it, as there was nearly a peck in bulk.

The cakes are about the size of the common Windsor shaving-soap, and each is worth one cent and a half—in fact, a fraction more, as eight of them pass for twelve and a half cents, or sixteen for a quarter of a dollar. Each cake is stamped with the name of the town where it is issued, and also with the name of the person who is authorised by law to manufacture it as a circulating medium; yet Celaya soap—for it also circulates in that city—will not pass at Queretaro. The reason I cannot divine, as the size and intrinsic value appear to be the same. The municipal authorities of either town appear to have made no provision for equalising the exchanges between the two places, and there are no brokers' offices for the buying and selling of uncurrent soap in Mexico.

Many of the cakes in circulation were partially worn, and



showed evidence indisputable of an acquaintance with the wash-tub ; but all were current so long as the stamp was visible. Frequently I remarked that some of our men would use one of these singular bits of currency in washing their hands and faces, and then pass it off for a plate of frijoles or an orange. Much amusement, too, did we have among ourselves while in the district where it passes as a legal tender, and "Are you out of soap?" and "How are you off for soap?" were expressions continually passing from mouth to mouth. The same cant phrase is common enough in the United States, and has been for years ; but how it originated is a matter of which I am most profoundly ignorant. At all events it is applicable enough in some parts of Mexico.

In the afternoon we received permission to roam through the city without a guard. As we passed a prison, we were hailed from its gloomy, grated windows by a voice in our own language. There were two Americans—natives of Philadelphia, I believe—in the prison, who had been employed to work a woollen or cotton factory near Queretaro, at a stipulated sum. Their employer had in some way broken his faith, and they had left him ; but his power was superior, and he had thrown them into prison to gratify a mean spirit of revenge. We told them that we, too, were prisoners, unable to afford them assistance, and then left them with wishes for their speedy release.

We next strolled through the principal streets, entering some of the stores, taverns, cigar and barber shops. In one of the latter I noticed two men busily employed in grinding and sharpening gaffs for fighting cocks, showing that this amusement is common among the denizens at Queretaro. One man was shaving a customer, but instead of lathering him after the French or English fashion, he placed a large composition or silver basin, having a hollow in one side to fit the neck, directly under the chin of the customer, and then soaped his face with his hands. It is a vile Spanish custom, this ; but, like thousands of others of that anti-go-ahead race, is persisted in. I thought of Don Quixote and Mambrino's helmet the moment I set eyes upon one of these basins.

In our stroll we passed the walls of an immense convent or nunnery, said to be a large village of itself. We could only see the tops of the buildings above the walls, for no one is allowed to pass the gates. We entered a large dry and



fancy goods store, having for a sign "Tienda de los Palomos," or Store of the Doves. Why the Mexicans name their shops and stores after cats, dogs, doves, and other birds and beasts, is a mystery to me. Their fondas and mesones all have religious names, or nearly all. It was quite common for us to stop at the tavern of the Holy Ghost, or Hotel of the True Cross, and others, a translation of which would appear irreverent and almost blasphemous to my countrymen.

Just as dark was setting in, and while three of us were crossing the market-place in the direction of a little Mexican restaurant, several stones were thrown at us from the dense throng at that hour congregated in the square. Fortunately not one of the missiles hit us, although they whizzed by close to our heads. Who the authors of this outrage were we did not ascertain; but they were probably some of the very lowest class, who only insulted us in this way to show their pitiful spite at our nation and religion. It was almost the only direct insult offered us south of El Paso, for generally the lower orders looked upon us rather as objects of pity than of hatred or revenge. We immediately entered the restaurant, after the outrage had been committed, and called for a supper, the perpetrators not following or molesting us farther.

While we were waiting for our meal, a monk or friar, of some poor and abstemious order, entered the apartment with a noiseless step. Tied about him with a piece of rope was a coarse blanket or gown, of a grayish yellow colour; his head was bare, the top of it being close shaven; and he may have been barefooted, for I do not recollect seeing either boot, shoe, or sandal upon his feet. In his hand he had a small tin box, resembling, in many respects, a lantern. At all events, I took it for a lantern; for as the room was but dimly lighted, and as he silently held the box close to my face, I thought he was endeavouring to scrutinize my countenance with the hope of recognising me by some mysterious and hidden light it might contain. A *galopina*, or kitchen girl, standing by, soon explained the business of the holy brother by dropping a quartillo into the box through a hole in the top, which I had not previously seen. Now the mystery was solved—the friar was holding the box in my face for alms. Fearing that I might have insulted him by rudely, although innocently, staring in in his face, I resolved upon



purchasing forgiveness to such extent as a quarter of a dollar would obtain, and accordingly dropped a coin of that value into the box. The amount purchased my pardon, if he thought I owed him one ; for, making a low bow, he gave me his *benedicite*, and then with dignified meekness left the room.

Weary from our long walk, and the early morning ride, we remained no longer than to obtain our supper, and then retired to our quarters at the old convent, meeting with neither obstruction nor insult on the way.



## CHAPTER XXVIII.

**Departure from Queretaro.—View of Queretaro from a Mountain Summit.—Number and Magnificence of its Churches.—Liberation of Frank Combs.—Arrival at San Juan del Rio.—The Indian Village of Tula.—Approach to the City of Mexico.—Mr. Navarro separated from his Companions.—“Quien Sabe?”—Kindness of the Indian Women.—Arrival at the old Palace of San Cristobal.—Description of San Cristobal.—Release of Falconer and Van Ness.—Difference in the Policy of the United States and English Governments.—File of Amerian Papers.—A Letter from Chihuahua, and its Effects.—Singular Tribunals, with the Results.—Wild Revel in San Cristobal.**

Immediately on leaving Queretaro, our road took us directly under the immense aqueduct which supplies the city with water. This aqueduct is a stupendous work, having been built many years since, by the Spaniards, when money was abundant and Indian labour easy to command. Pure water is carried by this means across a wide valley, the head spring being on a mountain side at a distance of some six or eight miles. The arches which support the stupendous fabrick are of stone, lofty yet light, and of graceful proportions. Far as the eye can reach, the aqueduct is seen stretching across the valley; now rising high above the surface of the ground as some low place is crossed, and again all but touching the higher undulations. At the point where we passed under one of the arches, and we were on the direct road to the city of Mexico, the water must have been forty or fifty feet above us—perhaps more.

After proceeding but a few miles, we commenced the ascent of a steep and lofty chain of mountains. Once at their summit, the view of Queretaro, and the beautiful valley in which it lies, is one of the finest and most lovely in all Mexico. The number of inhabitants in the city we had just left, does not probably exceed fifty thousand, but as is the case in every large town of the country, there are churches enough to supply the spiritual wants of six times that num-



ber in the United States. These churches, too, are built upon a scale, both in size and magnificence, to which we are perfect strangers, and give an appearance of splendour to their cities which without them would sink into comparative insignificance.

While stopping for a short time to rest, during the middle of the day, the diligence drove up on its way from the city of Mexico to Guanajuato. Among the passengers were two or three Englishmen, who informed us that in consequence of the escape of two of the men attached to Colonel Cooke's party, they had all been placed in irons. As to what disposition Santa Anna would finally make of them, they could give us nothing but mere speculation and idle rumour.

During the next day's march we again met the stage ascending a high steep hill. The driver stopped to allow a passenger, an American gentleman, to alight for a moment. He inquired for me, and gave me a letter which I at once knew was from Mr. Lumsden. I have already mentioned that I had heard, while at Guanajuato, of one of my partners having reached the city of Mexico for the purpose of obtaining my liberation as speedily as possible, but my informant could not give me his name, and until this moment I did not know which of my associates was thus exerting himself in my behalf.

It will be readily supposed that I devoured the contents of this letter with no little avidity. It was to the effect that young Frank Combs had been liberated, and that every exertion should be made to effect my speedy release on reaching the city. I had all along supposed that the Mexican government could not possibly detain me twenty four hours, after a statement of the manner of my arrest and the circumstances attending it was properly laid before those in authority by Mr. Ellis, our then minister; but in these anticipations I was destined to be most grievously disappointed. Santa Anna had no idea of letting me off so easily.

We arrived at the town of San Juan del Rio on the evening of January 27th. This place is situated upon a small river, and is the last town of any note before the traveller reaches Mexico, although the remainder of the road runs through a succession of villages. We met two or three Americans of San Juan, who only corroborated the story that our comrades in Mexico were chained in couples and compelled to toil in the streets.



We had proceeded but a short distance the next day before it was discovered among ourselves that two of our men had made their escape—frightened to this step probably by the stories of chains and servitude. We said nothing about it at the time ; but when our guard counted us at night the fact of their having escaped became known. They were afterward retaken by a small party sent out for the purpose, closely guarded to the city of Mexico, and there thrown into that vilest of holes, the *Acordada*, as a punishment for their offence. With but a single exception, this was the only unsuccessful attempt made to escape while we were in the country.

Early in the afternoon of the 1st of February we reached the large Indian village of Tula, some ten or twelve leagues from the city of Mexico. Scarcely had we entered the quarters which had been provided for us, at a commodious meson fronting immediately upon the market-square, when a confused shouting was heard in one of the streets leading to the plaza—a hubbub as of boys following a military volunteer company in the United States. Before we had time to reach a corner of the square, whence the shouting appeared to come, we encountered a medley and most singular procession of ragged Indians. Preceding them was an eccentric and oddly-attired personage, who appeared not only to act as master of ceremonies, but took it upon himself to sell invitations to join in the grand procession and a mass which accompanied it. One of these invitations I purchased. It was written on a page of foolscap paper, the edges embellished with a wide and gaudy border, within which was a quotation in Spanish from the twenty-sixth chapter of St. Matthew, thirty ninth verse—“O my father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me.” Then followed a short sketch of the sufferings of our Saviour, of his great love for our fallen race, and of his betrayal by Judas, while at the bottom of all was an invitation in terms somewhat like the following: “Captain Don Lauriano Rodea and friends supplicate your assistance on the 1st and 2nd days of February,” and the invitation which supplicated for this assistance was sold for *dos reales*—twenty-five cents.

In advance of the procession walked, or rather jumped, two grotesque and diabolical figures. Of the sex, colour, or condition of these actors in the crowd we could form no opinion. Their faces, save the eyes and teeth, were completely hidden



by hideous masks of black crape, while their bodies were covered with a dingy, dirty black dress, fitting closely to the skin. They did not walk, but crooked their knees, crouched their bodies as close to the ground as possible, and then hopped about after the manner of orang-outangs or kangaroos. Whenever a door was passed, at which stood some girl fairer and better clad than usual, one of those grotesque figures would hop hurriedly after her, grin hideously with his white teeth, and so frighten the pursued that she would instantly seek shelter within the house. These little innocent eccentricities on the part of the gentleman in black, who performed the most wonderful feats of agility while hopping from point to point, were much relished by the crowd of boys and idlers in attendance upon the procession. I was unable to make out the characters sustained by these imps of darkness; but whether devils or judases, they certainly well sustained their parts, in action and appearance.

Immediately in their rear followed some four or five swarthy, dirty-faced, half-grown boys, dressed to represent angels, although they were like almost anything else. Their once white robes were soiled and stained until they had become a dirty yellow; their wings were unhinged, broken, discoloured, and draggling; their thick, uncombed hair was filled with withered flowers, or encircled with faded wreaths; their gait was awkward and swaggering, and, take them altogether, a sorrier set of angels were probably never let loose upon the earth. Had they been personating angels of darkness, their aspect certainly would have been appropriate, to say nothing of their acting. It was shrewdly suspected that one or two of these good spirits had been partaking rather more freely of aguardiente than became their calling. The tail of the procession was a rabble of men, women, and children, the latter improving every moment in letting off squibs and crackers among the throng.

At the church, whither we followed the crowd, a short service appeared to end the ceremonies, at least for that day; for after it was concluded, the good and evil spirits broke up the order of march, and mingled promiscuously with the swarthy populace. So far as the sending up of rockets, and other exhibitions of the like nature, went—for, without fireworks, a Mexican celebration is incomplete—the strange mummeries were kept up until a late hour. Such were the performances at Tula on the 1st of February; what they



were on the 2nd I know not, although I had purchased an invitation to take part in them.

With the supposition that we were that evening to be marched into the great city of the Montezumas, we left Tula at an early hour in the morning. We had now been some three months and an half upon the road, journeying through twenty degrees of latitude, and exposed to hardships and privations innumerable. The fate of all, whether good or evil, was soon to be decided. Upon the flimsy pretext that one or two of their companions had escaped, we knew that Santa Anna had chained Colonel Cooke's men, and what was worse, had sent them to work in the streets and ditches—a punishment awarded only to criminals. Was our fate to be the same? The mind of each man was racked to answer the question—speculation only ended in doubt and uncertainty.

We had supposed that we were to be marched directly into the city, which, by the middle of the day, was only concealed by a mountain, when at a fork of the road a halt was called. At this point Mr. Navarro was separated from us, for what reason no one could divine. Under a strong guard he was conducted directly towards the city, while we were ordered to pursue the left-hand fork of the road, which led we knew not whither. We asked the dragoons, riding on either side of us, as to our destination. Our only answer was the eternal "*quien sabe*?" The Mexicans of the lower classes, if unable to answer a question, instead of giving a decided negative, invariably use this exclamation of "*quien sabe*?" the literal meaning of which is, "who knows?" thus answering one question by asking another. The expression is, however, equivalent to "*I don't know*" in English.

Our route now took us through a thickly-settled and tolerably well-cultivated country, although squalid poverty was to be seen on every side. The half-dressed, swarthy Indian women, with their black, but mild and pensive eyes, came running from the adobe houses, many of them in tears at our sad and wretched appearance; for by this time some twenty of our party were down with the small-pox and other diseases. Murmuring the universal exclamation, *pobrecitos*, they would divide tomares,\* tortillas, fruit—in

\* The *tomale* is made of meal, with a slight mixture of red pepper and meat. It is then wrapped in the husks of corn and boiled.



short, their little all—among men whom they must have supposed to be on the road to execution.

About noon, and after passing a poor village with a large and once magnificent church, the celebrated lake of San Cristobal appeared in sight. A few hundred yards farther we were halted in front of the old Palace of San Cristobal, once a celebrated summer residence of the Spanish viceroys, but long since deserted, and now fast crumbling to decay. We were ordered to enter its wide doorway; but why we were brought to a place so desolate and gloomy no one could imagine. The captain of our guard shrugged his shoulders when interrogated as to the cause of this singular movement, and after saying that he had been ordered to lock us up in San Cristobal, briefly remarked that he had obeyed his orders.

The key had hardly turned in the lock when three or four horsemen, evidently foreigners from their style of dress and riding, were seen galloping towards us across the plain. They pulled up in front of our miserable quarters, and, on alighting, I, for the first time, recognised Mr. Lumsden as of the party. After a short conference with the captain of our guard, and leaving their pistols and knives with the sentinels at the door, for no traveller ever rides to the outskirts of the city of Mexico without arms, the party were allowed to enter.

That I was overjoyed at meeting with Mr. L. may easily be imagined. His companions were American gentlemen, residing in the city of Mexico. Learning early in the morning that the prisoners were approaching, they had ordered horses and immediately come out to meet us. Finding that we had taken a different road, on reaching the fork where Mr. Navarro had been separated from us, they followed upon our track until they at length found us securely locked up within the crumbling walls of the old Palace of San Cristobal.

As regarded my own prospects of release, my friends gave me every encouragement. They appeared sanguine that but a few days would elapse before I should regain that liberty of which I had been so unjustly deprived for nearly five months; and as the afternoon was now far advanced, and the distance some twelve miles to the city, they took their leave, after promising to visit us again the next day.



The Palace of San Cristobal is pleasantly situated upon a plain, and immediately in front are the lake of the same name and one of the canals to be met with in the valley of Mexico. In the immediate vicinity there are no buildings, save the miserable mud-hovels of a few poor wretches, whose means of procuring an honest livelihood must be precarious indeed. Directly in front of the palace, the range of mountains which divides the valley of Mexico from that of Puebla was seen in the distance, while to the right one of the high and snow-capped volcanoes, which give to the scenery of Mexico its grandeur and sublimity, was seen rising far among the clouds. In clear weather the mountain-top is plainly visible, as is also the volcano upon its side; but on the day of our arrival the atmosphere betokened rain, and its summit was covered with a fleecy veil of clouds.

The building in which we were confined may have been a very respectable palace in its day, but when we were there it would hardly afford shelter for the bats our presence frightened from their retreats. It is two stories high, and built in the fashion of nearly all the large houses in Mexico, in a quadrangular form, having a patio or court-yard in the centre. The entrance was through a large gateway. The ground floor of the front part of the building contained four rooms, while in the second story was a large dining hall, flanked by a bedroom at one end, and a small kitchen at the other. The only apartment in the house having any pretensions to being habitable was the bedroom I have just mentioned, and this the captain of our guard appropriated to his own use and that of his brother officers. The dining hall was given to the Texan officers and merchants, while the poor soldiers were compelled to take up their quarters in the yard below, and in such of the dilapidated rooms of the first story as were in any way tenantable. The ravaging tooth of time had eaten away almost the whole interior of the building, leaving the outer walls alone untouched, and into these cold, dreary, and miserable quarters were some hundred and fifty of us thrust—into a hole which would not afford even tolerable shelter for half that number of brute beasts. Another thing which served to render our quarters far more disagreeable, was the fact that by this time eighteen or twenty of our number had the small-pox, and many of them were delirious. In this situation we passed our first night at San Cristobal.



At an early hour the next morning a Mexican officer arrived from the city, bringing orders for the immediate release of Van Ness and Falconer. The former was liberated entirely through the influence of the Mexican Secretary of War and Marine, General Tornel, who was well acquainted with the family of Van Ness at Washington, and who had received from them many favours; but with Falconer the case was different. He had been demanded, as I understood at the time, by the British minister, and this demand had been followed by his immediate release. Afterward, I heard a different version of the story.

Our liberated friends had scarcely departed for the city, in a coach provided for the purpose, when we were visited by Brantz Mayer, Esq., United States secretary of legation, and by the American consul at Mexico, Mr. Black. Mr. M. inquired of me the circumstances of my arrest and all the information I could give relevant to my case, as also to that of several others who claimed American protection. I told him that I had given Mr. Ellis, in several letters that I had written while upon the road, full particulars in relation to myself; that my case was much clearer than that of Mr. Falconer, inasmuch as I had joined the expedition with the previously-expressed intention of travelling through Mexico, had provided myself with a passport before leaving New Orleans, and had entirely separated myself from the expedition previous to the time of my capture. In addition, I told Mr. Mayer, that while I rejoiced with Mr. Falconer upon his happy deliverance from the worst of bondage, I certainly thought it very singular, and by no means flattering to that country from which I claimed protection, that while a British subject, who was in a greater degree implicated than myself, was immediately liberated, I was held a prisoner even for a moment.\* He expressed every sympathy, said

\* In comparison with the English government, and with not a little reluctance do I say it, that of the United States is notoriously slow in interfering for its citizens when their personal liberty has been infringed upon—a statement the truth of which will be attested by every American who has travelled in Mexico or other foreign countries. The British government looks upon the *liberty* of the subject as paramount to all considerations—that of the United States will promptly enough interfere when a barrel of flour is unjustly taken from one of its citizens, but let him be deprived of his liberty, and the matter requires, to use the words of the old diplomatist in one of Power's plays, "a mighty deal of nice consideration." So



that Mr. Ellis would exert himself to the utmost to effect my release, and after offering me any assistance I might require, left the prison.

In the afternoon I was again visited by Mr. Lumsden, who was now accompanied by Lieutenant Blunt of the United States navy, Mr. Mc Rae, who had but recently arrived with despatches from the United States, and several other American gentlemen, residents of the place. They brought us out a liberal supply of cigars, fruit, and other refreshments, and what to me was of far more value and interest, a number of American newspapers. In the *Picayunne*

well is this policy of the United States government understood in Mexico, that while an American is allowed to remain for months in a loathsome prison, a single word from the British minister will give immediate liberty to a subject of that government, incarcerated for the same offence and in every way equally culpable. The Americans, all over Mexico, openly speak of the insults they receive and the little personal security they enjoy, and many of them even told me that were they to enter the country again they would carry British 'protections in their pockets. An American citizen, who boasts of his birthright and of the great liberty he enjoys at home, hears these mortifying admissions while abroad with wounded pride; but hear them he must, and, in addition, will feel and know that they are founded in truth. Since the arrival in Mexico of our present minister, General Thompson, and the powerful and decided papers of Mr. Webster have appeared, the tone of the Mexican government may have changed somewhat; I allude above to the state of feeling existing while I was in the country.

After my return to the United States I saw and read a letter from Judge Ellis, to our then Secretary of State, Mr. Webster, in which the suddenness of Mr. Falconer's release is accounted for. By this document it would seem that Mr. Pakenham, the British minister, immediately on the arrival of Mr. F. at San Cristobal, called upon Santa Anna and presented him with a letter from Queen Victoria announcing the birth of the Prince of Wales. His excellency, the Provisional President, as an act of courtesy usual on such occasions, released Mr Falconer the moment the British minister mentioned that he was a prisoner. Now, this was all right enough; but it is certainly unfortunate for us poor Republicans that no such door is open for our release when confined under similar circumstances. A corresponding increase to the family of one of our presidential ladies might take place, although such an event can hardly be looked for, and not a whit should we be gainers by it, while any addition to that of the august sovereign of Great Britain is a "walking paper" to her incarcerated subjects. We boast much of our freedom, and the perfect equality we enjoy, both at home and abroad, as compared with the people of other nations: surely, some provision should be made for us in contingencies like the above.



I read, for the first time, a letter from Chihuahua, which directly implicated me as connected with the expedition, it being incorrectly stated that I was of the *avant couriers* sent forward by Colonel Cooke on approaching the settlements of New Mexico. Knowing that the Mexican government would eagerly seize upon any pretext to annoy one of whom, from the general tone of the articles in his paper in relation to Texan affairs, it could entertain no friendly feelings, I at once declared my belief that the publication of the letter would cause me months of imprisonment. My friends thought differently, and before leaving endeavoured to convince me that I should regain my liberty in a day or two; but I had a presentiment that no such good luck would befall me, and with this feeling passed my second night in San Christobal.

During the first five days in the old palace we received regular visits from the Americans and other foreigners of the city. For the more destitute they brought blankets and different articles of clothing, and by their many acts of kindness endeavoured to make all as comfortable as they could be under the circumstances. It was during one of these visits that our friends gave us the particulars of a celebration in the city in honor of Santa Anna's leg—the one he lost when San Juan de Ulua and Vera Cruz were taken by the French. On the present occasion, a general holyday was given, and the limb was borne about in procession with great pomp and ceremony. Santa Anna makes much capital out of this affair—enough to console him, probably, for the loss of the limb. On several occasions it has been carried about in procession, and I have little doubt that the leg, *in pickle*, is of infinitely more service to him than when attached to his own proper person.

The day after our arrival at San Cristobal, a sum of money was sent out, by the Mexican government, of sufficient amount to distribute twenty-five cents to each man: the same sum was also furnished the next day. With this the men could procure for themselves food enough, in the shape of frijoles, tortillas, chile guisado, and other articles which the Mexican women brought to our quarters, to appease the keen demands of appetite—it was all they were allowed. On the third day the supplies from the city were stopped. The fourth day came, and still no money; the fifth, likewise, and with it no succour. By this time the sufferings of those



who had no money were severe in the extreme, and the tricks they resorted to in order to obtain food were ingenious to a degree, and occasioned not a little merriment.

Among the prisoners were a number of lawyers, doctors, and other professional men—persons who, either from a love of wild adventure or because they could obtain no professional employment in Texas, had originally been induced to join the expedition. Then there were several comedians among them, mad wags, who, finding that the drama yielded them but slender support in the new Republic, had shouldered the rifle and taken to the prairies for a better. Out of such materials it may readily be conceived that the richest fun and frolic could be extracted, and the story of one of their maddest pranks I will relate.

The wags knew that among the officers and merchants there were some who had money, and to levy a tax upon such pockets as were best filled these fellows commenced a game which, in the end, not only proved every way successful, but afforded infinite amusement to all. They in the first place fitted up an old, dilapidated apartment as a court-room. With two barrels and as many boards they made a kind of platform, upon which, as a bench, a claret-box was placed. and upon this the jokers seated the largest prisoner in the whole collection as judge—a half lawyer, who, in addition to having all the gravity of the Grand Turk himself, wore whiskers, mustaches, and hair in quantity sufficient to supply wigs for an entire bench of English justices. A sheriff, crier, and clerk—men who well understood their business—were then appointed; an eccentric comedian, who could speak for hours upon any subject, and possessed the keenest wit and the strongest imitative powers imaginable, was chosen prosecuting attorney. As principal witness in any cases that might be brought they fell upon a little Irishman named Jimmy Tweed. Jimmy was born and bred a soldier. He first drew breath in the barracks of a recruiting regiment in Ireland, and in process of time, after having picked up a fair education among the officers, joined the regiment as a soldier. The term of his enlistment he served principally at Gibraltar, where he obtained a name, to use his own words, “for being up to all manner of diviltry,” and where he also learned a smattering of Spanish. On being discharged, he visited the United States, joined the army, served two or three campaigns in Florida, and was finally discharged regularly at



**Baton Rouge, in Louisiana.** To finish his education, as he said, he then went to Texas, and after various campaigns, was finally taken prisoner in New Mexico. He had all the wit of his countrymen, and a fund of dry humour which was inexhaustible.

Thus organized, the court proceeded to the trial of such cases as they thought might be turned to their own profit. More decorum, more order, or more gravity of deportment was never seen in any court of justice. The crier in some way procured a small bell, and in regular form called the court together and issued his proclamations—the sheriff, with all the dignity imaginable, commanded silence, compelled all to take off their hats, and was very efficient in preserving the best order.

The first action upon their singular law-docket was brought against a young and very worthy man, a merchant, who was charged with being a “a great fool generally”—I am not altogether positive but that the first word in the indictment may have been a much more forcible adjective than the simple term “great.” The judge remarked that the charge was one extremely grave in its character, and admitted that he could not, at the time, think of any precedent that might guide him in his decision, which, he wound up by saying, should be a just and a righteous one. The prosecuting attorney, after a few pertinent remarks, brought up several witnesses to sustain the charge. Their evidence, which of course was made up and suited for the meridian of this particular court alone, all went to support the prosecution. The case, as made out, was clear enough—not a doubt arose as to the truth of the charge set forth in the indictment—but to make all sure, Jimmy Tweed was brought up to the stand. After kissing a brickbat with due gravity, there being no Bible in the court, Jimmy proceeded with his testimony. He instanced several particulars in which the accused party had evinced very little foresight—mentioned several of his actions which manifested great lack of judgment and knowledge of the world, and finally wound up by saying that the fact alone of his being found in company with the Santa Fé Expedition was ample evidence against him.

At this point of the trial symptoms of uproarious laughter were manifested in court, all which were instantly quelled by the sheriff, and the judge then proceeded to give his decision. Drawing himself up, throwing back his head, and clearing his



throat with a preparatory "hem," and then raising one leg over the other with all becoming dignity, he remarked that all the evidence bore strongly against the accused, but that the testimony of the last witness, in particular, view it in what light he would, clearly sustained the charge that the arraigned party was slightly afflicted with a weakness known as "the simples"—troubled with not being so particularly wise as he might and should have been. He admitted that the charge which had been thus proved was a misfortune rather than a crime; but inasmuch as the times were hard, and victuals scarce, he should impose a fine of two dollars upon the accused. The latter, who enjoyed the joke as much as any one, interposed no motion in arrest of judgment, but paid the fine at once, and thus ended the first trial.

The next action brought, although not quite so grave in its nature, produced an infinite degree of merriment. One of our officers, Captain H., was charged with bad singing, or rather, as the indictment read, "with attempting to sing and making out badly at best." A number of witnesses testified that at different times they had been most excessively annoyed, even to the losing of sleep, by the attempts of the accused at divers songs. They all admitted, during a process of cross-questioning, that they were not exactly good judges of music; still they considered themselves blessed with ears which taught them to distinguish between the warbling of a canary and that of a crow—thought they could discover a soothing influence in the notes of a nightingale which they missed in the braying of a donkey. But as the testimony of Tweed went directly to prove the charge, and was a perfect gem in its way, I shall give it as nearly as possible in his own words.

"Yer oner," said Jimmy, with a ludicrous mock gravity and quizzical leer of his dexter eye, "yer oner, as I was walkin' across the corral last evenin', I heerd sthrange, mysterious, and most unnath'ral sounds issuin' from the officers' quarters up stairs—sounds resemblin', yer oner, those made by a sawmill, whin in the full tide of manufacthuring boards. Well, my curiosity bein' excited, I bethought mezelf I'd be after investigatin' the thing; so whin I was *abajo*, yer oner, which is the best Spanish I have at prisent about me for the foot of the stairs, I heerd the sthrange sounds louder and louder than iver. Up the steps I wint, and whin I was *arriba*, which manes, yer oner, the head of the



stairs, divil a bit did it stop at all, at all. What in the name of all the saints, thinks I to meself, has put a sawmill in operation here away? for I still thought it was one, yer oner; so I opened the door cautiously, poked my head in slyly, and what should my own eyes see and my own ears hear but Captain H. himself, essayin' a bit of a ditty, yer oner."

"Doing *what*?" questioned the judge.

"Essayin' a ditty, yer oner—attempting a stave of a song—and—"

"Enough," interrupted the high functionary upon the claret box. "If you mistook the singing of Captain H. for those sounds ordinarily produced by a sawmill, the case is clear enough that he has undertaken a task which neither nature nor cultivation fits him to carry successfully through, and I shall fine him one dollar and fifty cents for the attempt."

In this way a number of cases, some for bad singing and others for speaking bad Spanish, were disposed of, and with the proceeds the merry wags procured a sufficiency of provisions and *chinguirite*, the latter a species of common rum manufactured from the sugar-cane, to hold a wild revel that night among the ruins of San Cristobal.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

Supply of money received.—Visited by a large Party of Americans from the City—Departure from San Cristobal.—Start for the City of Mexico upon Asses.—The easy Gait of the genus Donkey.—Arrival at the Shrine of “Our Lady of Guadalupe.”—Nuestra Senora de los Remedios.—Mexican Beggars.—The Garita.—Mexico, as seen in the Distance.—Arrival within the City.—Forlorn appearance of the Texans.—Anecdote of Major Bennett.—Arrival at the Hospital of San Lazaro.—A dreary Night.—Description of San Lazaro and the unfortunate Lazarinos.—New Sports and Dances.—We are visited by Mr. Mayer and other Americans.—Kindness of the Mexicans in their Hospitals.—Visits of the Physician.—Removed to other Quarters.—Worse and Worse.—Our Friends gain Access by Bribery.—Departure of Mr. Lumsden and Friends for the United States.

On the day following that on which the singular and laughable trials took place, and the wild feast that followed them, a sum of money was received from Mexico for our men. On the same day, two or three physicians were sent out by Santa Anna to examine our sick. A report now obtained currency to the effect that such of the prisoners as were able to walk would be escorted immediately to Puebla, or the castle of Peroté, in the direction of Vera Cruz, while those who were unwell would be taken to some hospital in the city. The physicians pronounced eighteen unfit to travel, and as I was labouring under cold and fever at the time, I was placed on the list. Of the others, almost all were afflicted with the small-pox, in some stage of the disease.

The day before our removal from our miserable quarters at San Cristobal, we were visited by a large party of Americans, among them Mr. Henry E. Lawrence, of New-Orleans, who had but recently arrived from the United States with despatches for Mr. Ellis. They all gave me every hope that I was speedily to be liberated, and seemed confident that I should return to my home in company with them; but I was led to believe differently. The publication of the Chihuahua



letter, I felt assured would be used by the Mexican government as a pretext to detain me, and at the time I could not think the measures taken by Mr. Ellis to effect my release as efficient as they should have been. I knew that a temporizing policy would never procure my liberation, and that so long as the subject of my imprisonment was left open to argument, I might be kept until my head was as white as the summit of Popocatepetl. I looked upon my own case in this light: I conceived that I had not in any way forfeited my claim to American protection, and that therefore an immediate demand for my release should be made. On the other hand, if I had lost my rights as a citizen of the United States, and should our minister view my case in that light, I neither wished nor expected that he would say or do any thing in my behalf. I was a citizen either of the United States or of Texas—if of the former, my imprisonment was unjust; if a Texan, I only hoped that nothing might be said in reference to my case, and in that event I should immediately set about making my escape. But while all this was passing through my mind, my friends told me that Mr. Ellis was using every exertion to procure my release, and that I was wronging him by harbouring a different opinion.

Will the reader, for one moment, place himself in my situation? He will then, if an American citizen, be better able to judge of my feelings. I had left New-Orleans, as I have before stated, with the openly-avowed intention of making a tour through both Texas and Mexico. I had armed myself, previous to starting, with a passport and other documents plainly defining my position, and on reaching Texas had still farther fortified myself with letters from influential gentlemen in that country, in which it was expressly stated that I had no connexion whatever, civil or military, with the Santa Fé Expedition—was subject to no control. On approaching the confines of New Mexico I had left the command, determined to take no part in whatever might occur. The first settlement I entered peacefully and openly—I attempted no disguise, for in the honesty of my intentions I could see no necessity for dissimulation or concealment. I was arrested, searched, robbed not only of property, but all my papers, and then, without a hearing or without a trial, forced to undergo the fatigues and dangers of the long march to Mexico. Arrived in the vicinity of that city, I made known my case to



the United States minister ; I informed him of the circumstances of my having left the Texan expedition upon the prairies, of my having been robbed of my papers and liberty on first reaching the settlements of New Mexico, with other important facts, and referred him to Messrs. Van Ness and Falconer, then at liberty, for the proofs. I also mentioned Colonel Cooke and Doctor Brenham, who, although they had lost their liberty, still retained their honour, as gentlemen who would corroborate my statements. I knew that in *thought* I had committed no offence whatever against the Mexicans, and that even in *deed* my actions could not, by the wildest and broadest construction, be perverted or magnified into crimes at all adequate to the punishment I had already received.

Such were my thoughts whenever my own case passed in review before my mind ; and when to these were added the facts that an English companion, whose position had certainly been more inimical than mine, had at once been liberated by the Mexican authorities, and that the imbecility and inefficiency of my government were a theme for the constant taunts and jeers of the Texans by whom I was surrounded, the American citizen, proud of his birthright, will be brought to see and feel the full bitterness of the situation in which I was placed. The fault lies not with the *people* of the United States, but with the *rulers* ; for the fact is notorious that a fear of losing political influence has induced those in power to sacrifice the independence and jeopard the honor of the country on more occasions than one. Full well does the Mexican government understand this weak point in our foreign policy, else we never should hear of our countrymen being arrested, robbed of all their evidence, denied a hearing, thrust into loathsome prisons among malefactors, compelled to labour in chains, and all to gratify the caprice or feed the revenge of some such tyrant as Santa Anna.

On the morning of the 9th of February, and in a frame of temper by no means amiable, I was ordered to prepare for the march to the city of Mexico. But a short time previous, General McLeod, and such of the prisoners as were able to make the journey, were marched off in the direction of Puebla, on foot and under a strong guard. They had scarcely gone when fifteen poor but hardy donkeys were driven up in front of San Cristobal for us to ride—three of our party being so weak that litters were provided to transport them.



Mounted upon the donkeys, and with a gang of beggarly *léperos* to drive them, were put *en route* for the great city of Mexico, distant some twelve or fourteen miles. In mere jest, and to cause uneasiness among the more inexperienced, we had frequently, while upon the road, spoken of the probability of our being compelled to enter that city mounted upon asses, as a species of punishment: little did I think, when I was giving all credit and colouring to these stories, that I was actually thus to make my own entrance—ride into the city of Montezumas upon an unsaddled and unbridled donkey!

Than a jackass there is perhaps no animal with a gait more easy; but to see a full-grown man mounted upon the back of one of them, without bridle or saddle, and with no other means of guiding or directing his course than by pulling his ears, is ludicrous in the extreme, to say the least of it. The patient animals, however, jog quietly along, their noses close to the ground, ready to pick any bit of orange-peel or chance blade of grass, and in the situation in which I then was I would hardly have exchanged the sluggish little animal on which I was perched for the proudest charger in Christendom.

After we had passed through a succession of poor villages, and across an arid plain, the lofty and imposing dome of the Cathedral of our Lady of Guadalupe appeared in sight. We soon entered the little village which surrounded the cathedral, our commander ordering a short halt to rest and obtain water and refreshments.

I did not enter this noted church, but its history was told us, and is interesting as showing by what nonsensical superstitions and barefaced impostures the poor Indians were originally gulled by a crafty priesthood. There are different versions of the story, but they agree in the main circumstances. Some three hundred years ago not a solitary hut was standing in a village which now contains its thousands of inhabitants, and probably one of the richest and most magnificent religious establishments in the world. Near the site of the church, shortly after the conquest by Cortez, a poor and simple shepherd was tending his flock, not a dwelling in sight save those in the distant city. Suddenly the Holy Virgin appeared to this wandering shepherd, clad in celestial raiment, and with a face of pure and heavenly beauty. She pointed to a small hill near, and then told him to



go forthwith to the city and tell the bishop it was her will that a chapel should at once be built upon the spot, to be dedicated exclusively to her. The affrighted man went to the city that night, but fearing the bishop would not believe his story, he did not communicate the holy errand upon which he had been sent. The next day the Virgin again appeared to him. With much trembling he told her that he feared to open her message to the bishop, lest that dignitary might ridicule him as a fool or an impostor. She again commanded him to communicate her desire to the bishop, and on his second visit to the city the shepherd made known to him all the circumstances. The bishop laughed at the man as an impostor, and desired him to bring some token that he had communicated face to face with the Holy Mother. He returned to his flock on the third day, and was again visited by the Virgin. She asked him if he had well performed his holy mission, to which he answered by telling her the result of his conference with the bishop, "Go," said she, "to yon barren rock," at the same time pointing to the desolate hill, "and bring me a bouquet of roses which you will find there." The poor shepherd, albeit knowing full well there was no roses or flowers of any kind upon the spot, obeyed her mandate. What was his surprise when he had found the roses as she had described them? He gathered a beautiful nosegay, and on returning to his singular visiter she told him to proceed with it at once to the bishop, and place it in his hands as an evidence of the truth of what he had seen and heard. He now cheerfully obeyed, and presented the flowers as commanded. On receiving them, the bishop discovered, imprinted upon the roses an exquisite miniature of the Holy Virgin—a miniature of such surpassing loveliness and finish as at once convinced him that other than the hand of man had painted it. Its divine origin, as the legend goes, now seemed to him unquestionable.

With unwonted pomp and ceremony he had the miraculous bouquet borne about in procession, the request of the Holy Virgin was at once obeyed, and a temple dedicated entirely to her service was immediately erected on the spot she had pointed out. The fame of the miracle spread far and near, and rich presents came flowing in from all quarters. The reigning monarch of Spain endowed with costly furniture and religious trappings the sacred cathedral of *Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe*; she was ordained the patroness of Mexico,



and to the present<sup>†</sup> time her temple is noted as among the richest in the world. Such the flimsy imposture, and such the result. The lower classes of Mexico still believe that the Virgin really appeared to the shepherd, and flock in thousands to her shrine at Guadalupe.\* As I have before stated, I did not visit the interior of the temple, but those who have, describe it as gorgeous and magnificent beyond comparison. The exterior I can answer for as being of grand dimensions and admirable architecture—partaking, so far as I was able to judge, of the Moorish and Gothic styles. A crowd of poor wretches—léperos, mendicants, and females in tattered attire—were lounging about the spot, and several of them even went so far as to ask alms of us, a party of sick, ragged, and miserable objects—calling upon every saint in the Mexican calendar to shower down prayers and blessings upon us in a torrent of abundance if we would but give them a solitary *claco*.†

The road from Guadalupe is a wide, straight thoroughfare, planted on either side with trees of rich foliage, and leads directly into the heart of the city of Mexico. As the hospital to which they were escorting us was situated at the extreme end of the city, near the point where the Vera Cruz road enters, the captain of our guard struck off across the

\* The entertaining writer Latrobe, in his work entitled “The Rambler in Mexico,” says that there is only one rival to the dominion of Our Lady of Guadalupe in the affections of the common people of the valley of Mexico, and that is *Nuestra Senora de los Remedios*, whose shrine is to be seen in a village near the base of the mountains west of the city. The léperos and poblanitas, the latter the more common girls of the city, pin their faith, in case of any impending danger, upon the wonder working image of her of Los Remedios; and in cases of great emergency, as during the prevalence of the cholera in 1833, she is brought with great pomp into the metropolis. On one occasion it was settled that she should pass the night in town, as the weather was unfriendly, and a suitable lodging was provided: but when morning dawned, “Our Lady” had vanished! The fact was, that nothing could keep her away from her own flock at Los Remedios, where, accordingly, she was found at dawn in her usual place, covered with mud, however, from having walked a number of leagues in a dark and rainy night! And this miracle is believed! Alas! poor human nature!

† A piece of copper money, worth one cent and a half. An immense batch of *clacos* were coined in 1842, but whether their intrinsic value was one cent and a half I have my doubts. Santa Anna, with some of the other government officers, probably made a “pretty penny” by the copper war which raged in Mexico during that year.



arid and desolate plains which lie between Guadalupe and Mexico, with the intention of finding a much nearer route. We were not in the least annoyed at this change, as not one of us felt anxious to show off our donkey-estrianism, if I may be allowed to coin a word, in the heart of one of the proudest cities of the world. All, or nearly all, too, were extremely unwell, and we were anxious to reach our quarters, roll ourselves up in our blankets, and obtain rest and sleep after the fatigues of the march.

Had we proceeded directly by the road, instead of endeavouring to find a shorter route, we should have reached our destination much sooner ; for we found the plains cut up by gullies and partially-dry canals, with here and there a small lake or pond by which our course was obstructed. After turning and buffeting about three or four hours to gain as many miles, we were at length fortunate enough to reach the Vera Cruz road, and following this, we soon passed the *garita*, or gate, and entered the great city of Mexico. While upon the sandy plains, the immense number of domes, steeples, and towers, of the proud metropolis of the New World, as its inhabitants are wont to term it, were plainly visible, presenting a view than which nothing can be more grand and imposing.

A more forlorn, wretched, ragged, and pitiable set of Christians surely never before entered the place. Three or four were in the very worst stage of the small-pox and borne along upon litters, while the rest were seated upon jackasses, and nearly all had the earlier symptoms of that disease plainly developed in their countenances. The clothing, too, of the majority, would have disgraced a party of beggars—a description of the different costumes were impossible. No wonder, then, that our appearance excited deep sensation among the women as we entered the city, for they crowded about us in groups, wondering at the sight of a party of strangers in plight so melancholy, guarded like criminals upon the road.

Although suffering severely from headache at the time, having but partially recovered from an attack of fever at San Cristobal, I still could not help laughing at a little circumstance which occurred before we had advanced twenty yards into the city. Among our party was old Major Bennett, our quartermaster before the capture of the expedition. The major was some fifty-five or sixty years of age, hale and hearty naturally, although suffering much at the time from



the severe headache and pains incident to the small-pox in its earlier stages. He was a native of Massachusetts, born and educated among the descendants of the Puritans, knew the Bible almost by heart, and was always ready with a passage from that book with which to illustrate or point his discourse. The major was a young man at the breaking out of the last war between the United States and England, immediately enlisted in the service of his country, and was a lieutenant at the celebrated and hard-fought battles of Bridge-water and Lundy's Lane. In the earlier conflicts of Texas he was also engaged, and was wounded in several places at the battle of Victoria. He was now sick and a prisoner, but nothing could depress his spirits or prevent him from quoting Scripture, in or out of season.

The anecdote I am about to relate showed the character of the man, and would have provoked a smile from Niobe herself. The major was drumming, with his heels, the flanks of a lazy donkey upon which he was mounted, when three or four women came out of a house immediately before him. Struck by his wretched appearance, the kind-hearted creatures clasped their hands with pity, uttered their common expressions of compassion, while their lustrous eyes became instantly suffused with tears. The major saw the effect his wo-begone aspect had created, and instantly resolved upon a speech. Seizing his donkey by the ear and pulling his head round—the common way of stopping the animal—he looked steadfastly in the faces of the poor women who had marked his appearance. He then raised his other hand, as if to impress more forcibly what he was about to utter, and ejaculated, "*Weep not, daughters of Mexico, your rulers are coming, seated upon asses.*" This slightly-altered quotation from the Scriptures he uttered with a mock-gravity truly ludicrous, and then, pulling his donkey's head back to its original position, by dint of much kicking forced into a mincing trot, and soon overtook our party. I had paused to hear the major's speech, well-knowing, from his character and the unwonted preparation he had made, that it would be something uncommon; but little did I think he would force from me a laugh so hearty as that which followed the winding up of his address. What the women thought of us I know not; they of course did not understand a word of what he said.\*

\* Some strange fatality appears to have attended my more intimate



After crossing a canal immediately in the outskirts of the city, and proceeding some three hundred yards, we were drawn up and halted in front of the old church and hospital of San Lazaro, or Saint Lazarus. Enclosed within a wall were several buildings, devoted to the use of the sick and also of the Priests and hospital attendants, while in the centre was a small garden, in which were a fountain and a profusion of roses other flowers. To the right of the main entrance stands the old church, which, with the department of the male *lazarinos*, or lepers, forms nearly one side of the establishment, and has no wall around it. In fact, the walls are only placed in the rear of the buildings.

Up to the very time of our arrival we were ignorant of our destination, and as we now gazed upon the hideous countenances that peered at us from the front building, we were still at a loss as to what manner of place had been selected for our new prison; that it was disgusting and horrible was evident enough.

A short conference with some of the attendants at the front door being over, our guard escorted us into the interior. Although the shades of evening had by this time set in, we could still see that the walls in the interior were hung with badly-painted pictures, the subjects all religious. Arriving at a species of anteroom, looking in and upon a long and dimly-lighted hall which was filled with cots, we were ordered to stop, and there take up our lodgings for the night upon the floor. Within the hall, though it was now nearly dark, we could plainly see wretched figures hobbling about, many of them upon crutches, and several of the unfortunate creatures who came and looked at us were entirely bereft of noses, and their faces otherwise horribly disfigured with sores. Our guard informed us that the inmates were suffering under that dreadful disease, the leprosy, an affliction almost unknown in the United States; but although we had much speculation on the subject, it was not until the next day that we were made fully acquainted with "the secrets of our prison-house."

After an indifferent night's sleep, for the passage-way in friends of the ill-fated Santa Fè Expedition. The ink with which I recorded the deaths of Fitzgerald, Brenham, Whittaker, Seavy, Holliday, and old Paint Caldwell had hardly dried, before I was compelled to add Major Bennett to the list. He died during the fall of 1843, in Texas.



which we had been compelled to take up our quarters was cold, dreary and uncomfortable, we rose the next morning to a full sense of our wretched situation. I was half dozing, when a slight shake of my shoulder aroused me to full consciousness. The regular physician at the hospital was standing by me, accompanied by the major-domo and several attendants. The former asked me my disease, felt my pulse, looked at my tongue, and then prescribed a dose of glauber salts and a light diet. In truth, I was in good health enough, only requiring quiet and nutritious food for a day or two to recover my strength; but the Mexican physician probably thought that salts could do me no harm, and accordingly prescribed them. I tried to beg off when the attendant brought me the medicine, but was compelled to swallow it to the very dregs. I have no peculiar partiality for salts at any time and now to take them when there was not the least necessity appeared to give the dose an additional bitter flavour. To all the other prisoners a particular medicine and diet was prescribed; those who were more severely afflicted were provided with cots in the long hall, while the rest of us were compelled to remain in the dreary passages where we had spent the first night. This not one of us regretted when we had an opportunity of seeing the companions with whom we should have been compelled to associate in the large hall of San Lazaro.

The room in which the men afflicted with the leprosy are confined is nearly three hundred feet in length, by about thirty-five in width. The windows are large and numerous, admitting a sufficiency of air during the heat of the day, and are all grated. At first I could see no reason why the windows of the hospital were grated; but afterward learned that when a person is known to be a *lazarino*, or leper, he is at once taken to San Lazaro, and there confined as a kind of prisoner until liberated by death—for I believe none ever recover from the horrible disease. At the time when we were confined in the hospital the male department contained some fifty or sixty inmates, while in the female part of the establishment, which was in another building, there was a still greater number.

I feel not a little reluctant to attempt a picture of the unfortunate wretches who inhabit San Lazaro. The disease with which they are afflicted is unknown in Anglo-Saxon countries, or if there are any cases they are very rare.



Other than those afflicted with the leprosy there were no occupants of the hospital until our arrival, and the reason assigned by the Mexican government for confining us there was said to be that we had a contagious disease among us. The appearance of the unfortunate lepers is loathsome and hideous to a degree that beggars description. It makes its first appearance by scaly eruptions on different parts of the face and body of the victim, and these eruptions are never perfectly healed. The limbs of many, and more especially the hands, at first appear to be drawn and twisted out of all shape. Gradually the nose and parts of the feet are carried away, while the features become distorted and hideous, The voice assumes, at times, a husky and unnatural tone. and again the doomed patient is unable to articulate except in a shrill, piping treble. With many, when near the last stages, all powers of speech are lost, and vainly do they endeavour to make known their wants by sounds which belong not to this earth of ours. Death steps in at last to relieve the poor creatures of their sufferings, and to them at least it would seem that the visit of the grim tyrant must be welcome.

Whether the leprosy of Mexico is contagious I am unable to say. With many I have little doubt that it is to a degree constitutional—being in fact, hereditary, and perhaps never entirely eradicated from the blood. The climate may have some effect in engendering and keeping alive the disease, but of this, too, I am uncertain. The common belief among the lower classes is, that it is communicated by contact; and indeed I am inclined to think the only risk a person runs of taking it is from touching the person of one afflicted with it in its worst stages. The families and friends of the *lazarinos* would frequently visit them, bringing many little luxuries to add to their comfort. They would sit and converse with them too for hours, apparently regardless of danger; but for myself I took particular care not to come in too close contact with the unfortunate lepers.

Notwithstanding their lot would seem to be most melancholy, as a body they appeared well to enjoy themselves. Afterward, and while confined among them for some two months, I had every opportunity to observe them closely; and one who has had no such opportunity can hardly imagine how much happiness and hilarity prevail among beings doomed to a lingering but certain death. Many of



them were continually playing at draughts or cards, taking the most intense interest in the games. On many occasions I saw parties of four engaged at cards who had not a single nose or entire finger among them ; and any little success of one of them would be hailed with every demonstration of delight. Their dexterity too, in shuffling and dealing cards, when bereft of fingers, was astonishing. Many of them were musicians, performing on both the harp and the mandolin, and after nightfall they usually had a dance among themselves. Frequently they were visited by some of the female inmates of the hospital who would join their merry makings. To describe one of their dances were impossible. A set of them would take the floor, composed of one or more couples. Some of the dancers were upon crutches, and almost all were in some way lame or disabled. The music would strike up, and then would follow some monotonous Mexican dance, accompanied by singing from voices which were excruciatingly harsh and discordant. The weird sisters around the magic caldron never made a more grotesque or frightful appearance than did these lepers, and had Macbeth encountered the latter upon the heath he would have run outright, without even exchanging a word of parley. The wretched inmates of the hospital enjoyed themselves however, at these dances, and but that their loud laughter was grating and discordant it would have sounded joyous enough. The true feelings of merriment were there, but no midnight revel of witches or hobgoblins, or of the misshapen dwarfs romancers have created, could compare with the horrible manifestations of mirth that fell upon our ears, or could in any way shadow forth the strange orgies we frequently beheld within the gloomy walls of San Lazaro.

We were visited the first day of our imprisonment here, by Mr. Mayer and a large number of Americans, all manifesting not a little disgust at the horrible situation in which they found us. Among the Mexicans themselves this hospital is looked upon with a feeling akin to terror—as a receptacle that never gives up its victims—for those who once cross its gloomy threshold seldom or never retrace their steps. Whether there are other patients than those suffering with the leprosy admitted within its walls I know not—the regular hospital for the small pox is situated in a



different part of the city, and why they did not take us to it was a matter of some surprise with all.

As regards our food, we had no reason to complain. In their hospitals the Mexicans are invariably kind and attentive to the sick, administering to their wants with unsparing hands. While at San Lazaro, four loaves of fine, well-baked wheaten bread were given to each of the Texan prisoners every morning—an ample supply for the day. For breakfast a tin cup of tea, made of some herb to which I am a stranger, was brought us. It was well sweetened, had a small quantity of milk boiled with it, and although weak and rather insipid, I have little doubt it was extremely wholesome. During the day a generous supply of orangeade was given us, cool and refreshing. At noon our dinner was brought to us in three tin cups, accurately made to fit one within the other. The upper one was covered and served as a cover for the second, as did the second for the one at the bottom. The lower cup was generally filled with mutton broth, having a piece of the meat left within it, and also a quantity of *garbanzos*, or large Spanish peas. In the second, they generally sent us a small piece of baked mutton, and in the upper cup we found alternately boiled rice and fried potatoes. Each cup was numbered with the figures attached to some cot in the hospital, and seeing the numbers on my dinner utensils staring me in the face from the couch of a leper, my appetite for the contents was gone at once. Afterward when we complained of this carelessness of the hospital waiters, the cups corresponding with the numbers of our cots were invariably brought to us. Neither knife, fork, plate, nor spoon was sent with the dinner, but as we had been accustomed to eat without such conveniences, their non-appearance gave us but little annoyance.

Many of the Texans had no appetites. Others, again, swallowed their food with much apparent satisfaction; but there were those among us who could not be induced to eat the plain but nutritious food offered them on the first day—the appearance of everything around was too revolting. Some of us succeeded, however, although against positive orders, in bribing our guard to smuggle in a quantity of fried eggs; and watching an opportunity when no one of the hospital attendants was observing us, we stealthily made a very good dinner. At night another cup of tea was brought



us, and the bill of fare of our first day in San Lazaro was not altered during the stay of any of the Texans, except that a lighter diet was ordered for those who were deemed unable to eat meat.

On the second morning we received another call from the physician. He examined us all as on his first visit, prescribing for such as he thought needed medicine. When my turn came I told the doctor that I was much better—a little weak only—and that I thought rest alone was requisite in my particular case. I was anxious to escape taking his vile medicines, and this time I succeeded.

In this way the first four days were spent, the doctor paying us regular morning visits, and our American friends calling upon us during the day. I was led to believe, in the mean time, that our minister might have obtained my release upon parole, until my case should be finally acted upon and decided by the Mexican government; but in this I was disappointed. I told my friends that I would always hold myself subject to the disposal of the American minister or the government of Mexico, and be in readiness, when called upon, let my sentence be what it might. Whether Mr. Ellis ever made an attempt to procure my release on parole or not I am unable to say; he may have thought it unadvisable to make any such solicitations while a correspondence was pending in relation to myself. Had I been imprisoned in any other place than San Lazaro, I should not have been so anxious to obtain a liberty only nominal; but to be compelled to breathe the air of that horrible place, and to have no associates but lepers and small-pox patients, was at first annoying to a degree that rendered the confinement almost insupportable. Some of my friends advised me to report myself well at once, in which case I should have been immediately taken to Santiago, and confined with Colonel Cooke's party. There I was confident I should be put in chains and compelled to work in the streets—by no means a pleasant anticipation to a person undergoing an imprisonment than which nothing could be more unjust. While halting between these opinions, and hardly knowing which to chose—San Lazaro, and all its horrors of association, or Santiago and the chain-gang—such of us as could not be provided with cots, were ordered to take up our beds—a blanket each—and prepare for instant departure.

There were eleven of us in all who were now ordered to



leave the hospital, seven of the original eighteen being unable to move. Under a strong guard we were escorted some three or four squares directly towards the heart of the city, in utter ignorance of our destination. Arrived in front of a gate having a mud house on either side, and a small, gloomy church in the rear, we were halted. An old Mexican in a ragged blanket soon appeared at the gate, and ushered us into a small room, upon the floor of which, stowed almost as close as they could be, were a coarse mattress and two clean blankets for each of us. Although the place seemed anything but comfortable, and in fact was in a condition hardly fit to shelter a brute, we still thought it a palace in comparison with San Lazaro—we could now breathe freely. Little did we then imagine the serious annoyances to which we were to be subject in our new quarters.

At dark, our rations of tea and bread were sent us from San Lazaro. The tea was brought in the regular hospital cups; but as the hideous inmates of that horrible place were no longer in our presence, we drank the beverage with far less reluctance. A regular guard of soldiers was now stationed over us, one of them marching up and down in front of our door. The old Mexican with the ragged blanket offered to do any little errand, and after sending him for candles we retired to our mattresses, firmly impressed with the belief that we were to sleep comfortably enough. The luxury of even a mattress we had been strangers to for nine months, a single blanket and the hard ground or floor having been the bed of each during all that time; but now that we had been provided with an apology for a place of rest—now that a coarse husk mattress was between us and the floor—we considered ourselves fortunate, and stretched our limbs upon the humble beds, confident of sound and refreshing sleep.

How bitterly were we disappointed! Scarcely had we touched the mattresses before we were visited by myriads of chinchas! From every crevice and cranny of the walls they poured in thousands—the cracks of the floor appeared to send forth their legions to the onslaught. I thought of our quarters at San Miguel; but there our tormentors came only by hundreds, while here we were literally eaten alive by thousands. The room we were in had been unoccupied, probably, for months, and our assailants were as bloodthirsty as hyenas. The witty little Irishman, Jimmy Tweed, who



was of the party, declared that he would willingly change his situation for a den of half-starved, royal Bengal tigers, while old Major Bennett alluded to the locusts and other plagues of Egypt as trifling in comparison with what we were compelled to endure. To obtain a moment of sleep was utterly impossible, and after a night spent in tossing and rolling about we were rejoiced when daylight came, for it drove our annoying visitors to their hiding-places. We made a complaint the next day, and asked to be removed to any place—back even to San Lazaro and all its horrors—but our request was unheeded. After this, and while confined in our present quarters, we slept much during the day, and our nights we passed in reading and conversation.

The colonel of the regiment from which our guard was detailed gave orders to the different sergeants that no one was to be allowed to visit or hold any conversation with us; but this did not prevent our friends from gaining access. A dollar, slyly slipped into the hand of any of the guard, would gain an admittance readily. Books and writing paper, besides many little luxuries, were brought by my friends; the old Mexican who had charge of the premises was always ready to bring us any article of food we might wish, and but for the vile chinchas at night we really should have passed our time agreeably enough. The sergeant of one of our guards, a light mulatto, was invariably attentive. He was born in New-Orleans, at but an early age emigrated to Mexico, where he had joined the army. Having picked up an education, just enough to read and write, he had been promoted, and ever when he was on guard we were well treated. He was particularly partial to me; learning that I was a resident of his native city, he asked me innumerable questions of the place and its older inhabitants, and invariably called me his *paisano*, or countryman.

On the 18th of February Mr. Lumsden, with a party of United States naval officers, among whom were Lieutenants Blunt and Johnson, left Mexico in the stage for Vera Cruz, on their way home. They had by this time nearly given up all hope of my being liberated through the intervention of Mr. Ellis, and Mr. L., in particular, was anxious that I should at once attempt an escape, either by bribing the guard or slipping past them in the night. The undertaking would have been fraught with little danger; but I was advised by friends, so long as my associate in business was in the country,



to make no attempt of the kind. His movements were said to be closely watched by the authorities; and had I escaped while he was in the city, the circumstance would, in all probability, have involved him in difficulty, and very likely have caused his arrest as in some way accessory. Under these circumstances I determined to make no attempt at an escape, at least until my friends were safely out of the country.



## CHAPTER XXX.

**Taken ill with the Small-Pox.—Washington's Birthday.—A Patriotic American.—Ordered to move our Quarters.—Once more among the Lepers of San Lazaro. Eight of our Companions marched to Santiago.—The Irons nothing *after* one gets used to them.—Fresh Air and Exercise.—System of Anointing in San Lazaro.—Anecdote of Lieutenant Burgess.—Visit from Mr. Lawrence.—His Departure for the United States.—A midnight Funeral in San Lazaro.—Mass in the Church of San Lazaro.—Decorations of the Establishment.—A Procession and a Present.—Don Antonio.—The Fruits of Mexico.—Visited by Mr. Falconer.—Beauties of the "Vicar of Wakefield."—Five of our Companions marched to Santiago.—Preparations for a Celebration.—The Hospital visited by Thronga.—Dinner provided for us by a Party of Ladies.—Strange Present from a Mexican Lady.—Another Celebration among the Lepers.—Fondness of the Mexicans for Flowers and Ornaments.—The Celebration closes with a Dance.**

On the 19th of February, the day after Mr. Lumsden left for New-Orleans, I was taken with a slight fever, pains in my bones and head, and other symptoms of the small-pox. I had been previously vaccinated, and therefore cared little for the disease except as it occasioned annoyance and severe suffering. On the 22nd, Washington's birthday, a lithographed portrait of the "Father of his Country" was brought to each prisoner by a warm-hearted and enthusiastic American resident, and accompanying these were a generous chicken pie and several bottles of excellent wine. I was much too ill, however, to partake of these luxuries; in fact I was unable to sit up from extreme dizziness and pain in my head. I took little or no medicine for the disease, and after suffering greatly for some six or eight days, finally recovered, and without being in the least marked. Those who had never been vaccinated suffered incredibly, and were badly pitted if they survived; but many of them died of the disease. In such as had been vaccinated, the disease was mild in comparison, although they endured the very extreme of pain



from bad attendance and the want of comfortable apartments and beds to sleep upon. That any of those recovered who had the disease in its worst form while upon the road, is certainly remarkable—their sufferings were horrible, and numbers of them were not only pitied to a great degree but one or two were so unfortunate as to lose an eye.

On the 25th of February, without a word or hint of previous warning, we were all ordered to pack up and remove to other quarters, our guard not even informing us whither we were to be taken. By this time I had almost entirely recovered from my illness, and as Judge Ellis had kindly sent me an excellent mattress and cot bedstead, I was very comfortable. My companions, who still slept on the floor, were exceedingly annoyed by the legions of chinchas that infested the place, but I was enabled to keep the tormentors from my immediate premises during the greater part of the night, and began fairly to conceive a liking for our prison-house, dirty and dreary as it was. The anticipation of being placed in worse quarters, for we heard horrible stories of the prisons of Mexico, may have induced this feeling.

After being formed in front of our prison, with the soldiers of our guard stationed on either side, we were ordered to march. Our course was in the direction of San Lazaro, and a walk of a few minutes found us once more safely housed within the walls of that gloomy establishment. Five of my convalescent companions were now ordered to be in immediate readiness for a move, together with three of those who had been left at San Lazaro when we were first taken thence. It was now evident that some of us were still to be retained within the hospital—the disposition to be made of our companions was shrouded in Mexican mystery, the most impenetrable of all. Under the usual strong guard the eight Mexicans were marched off, each man carrying his blanket and little wallet.

The next day, a Mexican girl called at San Lazaro with news of Colonel Cooke's party. Watching an opportunity, when no one was observing us, Francisca, for that was the girl's name, slipped a note into my hand. As soon as I could open it without attracting the notice of our sentinels, for one or two of them were continually marching before our cots, I found the billet to be from one of our companions who had been separated from us the preceding day. He said that they were all with Colonel Cooke's party at Santiago,



*and in chains*: but that wearing the “trinkets” was nothing after a person *got used to them*! This was philosophical, to say the least of it. In addition, the writer informed me that a number of the prisoners were about to be taken to Tacubaya, a small but pleasant village some five miles from the city, to work upon the road in front either of the archbishop's or of Santa Anna's palace, and that I could probably join the delightful party by reporting myself well! Here was an opportunity to *get used to chains*, and to obtain fresh air and exercise; but feeling that I had no highway taxes to work out in Mexico, and not being particularly anxious to appear in public with one end of a long, jingling, clanking chain made fast to my ankle, and a man at the other end, I took all the pains in my power to decline the polite invitation of my friend. I was in no very enviable situation, to be sure, confined in San Lazaro among hideous, unclean wretches, whose very aspect was enough to frighten a man into almost any measure; but as in the hospital they would not place me in chains, and as I would have a far better opportunity of making an escape while there, I resolved to remain and forego all the fresh air and exercise I might obtain while working upon Santa Anna's roads, and in the fetters of a criminal. To remain at San Lazaro was a matter easy enough, at least so long as real sickness might detain any of my companions; for the hospital physician was a worthy, good-natured man, not disposed to investigate too closely a chronic rheumatism I “got up” especially as an excuse to stay. The only prescription he ordered in my case was a warm bath in the morning, and an occasional greasing at night. The former was agreeable enough; the latter I infinitely preferred to taking his vile glauber salts, *cosamiento blanco*,\* and other inward remedies. This practice of anointing the prisoners from head to foot, with a preparation of hartshorn, lard, and other ingredients which I could not detect, was very common in San Lazaro.

I remember laughing heartily one evening while Lieutenant Burgess, one of the Texan officers, was rubbed with the liniment by a broad-shouldered, large-mouthed Mexican. The former was a man of less than the medium size, while the operator was one of the largest Mexicans I had ever seen

\* The *cosamiento blanco* appeared to be very common and very innocent medicine—to judge from its appearance and taste, a mixture of magnesia and water.



He had just finished rubbing the shoulders of the lieutenant, and had ceased his operation for a moment, when Burgess, looking him full in the face, with a ludicrous expression of mock-gravity and well-counterfeited alarm, exclaimed, "I wonder if the fellow is going to swallow me alive!"

On the 26th of February, Mr. Lawrence, who was to depart the next morning in the stage for Vera Cruz, called at San Lazaro to take his leave of me, accompanied by a gentleman who is a Corsican by birth, but who is a naturalized American. They were not admitted into the hospital, express orders having been given that no foreigner should be allowed to visit us; but the sergeant of the guard permitted me to see them at the front entrance. Lawrence's face gave me little encouragement as regarded my liberation. He endeavoured to offer some hopes of a speedy release, but I could plainly read that he hoped rather than believed such would be the case. After I had told him to inform my friends in the United States that I would contrive some way to escape if the government did not effect my liberation, that I had already gone through much and could endure a great more, my two friends took their leave. Why I know not, but during an imprisonment of seven months I never felt so dispirited, so ill at ease, and so restless as on this occasion, and determined to embrace any opportunity to escape that might occur.

The night Lawrence left us, a poor leper died in our room. To pass away the long evening I was engaged at a game of piquet with one of my fellow-prisoners, when an attendant came and requested us to speak only in whispers as there was a man dying a few yards from us. He said there was no objection to our continuing our play; but as a priest was in close communion with the sufferer, loud talking might disturb him in his holy office. We ceased playing when the game was over, and immediately after retired to our cots.

I could not but indulge in a train of serious reflections upon the singular objects by which we were surrounded. In the same room, and but a few steps from me, an unfortunate *lazarino* was receiving the last consolations the religion he professed offers to the dying, while close by, a party of his companions, themselves within a few short steps of the same grave which was soon to receive the dying man, were busily engaged at a game of *monte*! So used to scenes of this



description were the inmates of San Lazaro that they would have indulged, even at this time, in their usual boisterous and most unnatural mirth had not the priest forbidden it. In a far corner of the room a musical leper was strumming some lively air on the mandolin; and although he played in a low and suppressed tone, many of the notes of glee must have reached the ear of the wretched sufferer. Directly opposite my cot, an aged and gentlemanly Spaniard, in the last stages of leprosy, and who, in fact, died a few weeks after, was ever and anon striking a light and smoking his cigarritos with cool and philosophical indifference. Around a small charcoal furnace, in the centre of the room, a knot of lepers were heating their atole and tortillas—and they, too, with the perfect consciousness that one of their number was about to leave them forever, were chatting busily and tittering with the half-suppressed laugh some story of merriment might elicit—a laugh which would have been boisterous had it not been restrained by the presence of the man of God. Even among ourselves, we could not look upon the scene with those feelings of awe and deep solemnity it would have awakened in other days; for the heart becomes callous by familiarity with affliction, misery, and death. While surrounded by the humanizing influences of society, it is difficult to conceive how the warmest feelings of our nature may become chilled by exposure to hardships and acquaintance with suffering; and confident I am that not one of the Texans then confined in San Lazaro can now look back upon the scenes he there beheld, without actual astonishment at the cold indifference he manifested at the time—scenes which, were he to encounter them at home, would arouse all becoming sensibility.

In the midst of a train of reflections, as singular in their nature as the associations around me, I fell asleep. About midnight I was awakened by the ringing of a bell and a tramp of men, and on opening my eyes beheld a procession of priests and attendants, bearing lighted candles, and preceded by a boy with a small bell, passing my cot in the direction of the dead leper—for he had now breathed his last. There is something touchingly solemn and impressive in the funeral rites of the Catholic Church, even at ordinary times and on ordinary occasions; but a midnight funeral, in such a dreary place as San Lazaro, gave an additional solemnity to the ceremonies. As the procession passed me, the



members of it were muttering inarticulate prayers and crossing themselves. The brilliant light from the numerous candles showed the inmates in different attitudes of prayer near their cots—now muttering a few words and then beating their breasts as in deep grief for the loss of their companion. Arrived at the corpse, it was placed in a rough coffin, all knelt around, a prayer for the rest of the departed spirit was said by one of the priests, and then, with incense burning and the bell ringing, the procession marched in regular order from the room, leaving all again in darkness. Thus ended the impressive and melancholy rites, but the memory of those midnight ceremonies must still haunt all who were spectators—I can never forget them.

The morning after the events I have just related happening to be Sunday, we were all aroused at an early hour by the ringing of a small bell, calling the inmates of the hospital to mass. On this occasion I rose, and hastily dressing myself, attended the celebration. The church formed one side of the establishment, and to prevent all means of escape, a guard was stationed at the outer door. The interior of the church was decorated with numerous paintings illustrative of the sufferings of our Saviour, and especially those of the patron saint of the establishment, St. Lazarus. These paintings were generally badly-executed copies, but a wax figure of the saint, lying in a glass case and representing him as dead, was revoltingly natural. The artist had represented his subject as covered with sores, and so faithfully that the beholder could not but instantly turn from its contemplation with feelings of deep disgust. The marble floor of the church, for in Mexico there are no seats in the religious establishments, was covered with kneeling lepers crossing themselves, beating their breasts, and telling their beads. After standing a short time in the church I left it for my quarters in the adjoining hospital, resolved never again to attend mass unless compelled by those in whose power I was; and as the priests of San Lazaro were so liberal as not to enforce our attendance, I did not a second time enter their church. In other places the prisoners were forced to attend the religious ceremonies, and in chains.

From the church I returned to my quarters, and began writing long letters to my friends in the United States, having learned that a packet was shortly to sail. At dinner-



time, and before I had yet finished a letter upon which I was engaged, we were visited by a procession of priests and young lads, the latter being engaged in a course of studies before taking holy orders. The visit was not intended for us alone, but for all the inmates of the hospital. The procession made the entire circuit of the room, one of the lads handing each of the unfortunate prisoners a *medio*\* and a small bunch of paper cigars. Our dinner, which on Sundays was a little better than during the week, although served in the same cups, was brought to us by the lads, and each knelt upon one knee as he gave it into our hands. After this, there was some little ceremony in relation to the poor leper who had died the night before, and this over, the procession left the room.

The old major-domo of the hospital, Don Antonio as he was called, allowed the fruit-women to visit us at all times, and this served to render our situation much more endurable. A person can live entirely upon the delicious and almost endless varieties of fruit which abound in Mexico, and little did I care for the boiled meats and broths—the regular hospital fare—when I could buy the fruit, which is there sold at a trifling cost. Not a day passed in which we could not purchase bananas, granaditas, oranges, melons of various kinds, pineapples, cayotes, chirimoyas, different species of a delicious fruit called the zapote, mangoes, and other tropical productions, many of which I have never seen in any part of the United States. Some of these fruits are raised in the vicinity of Mexico, but the larger portion are brought from the *tierras calientes*, or hot countries, the great elevation and consequent coolness of the climate in the neighbourhood of the city not allowing them to be cultivated in their full perfection.

On the 2nd of March, the secretary of legation, Mr. Mayer, who was ever attentive to me during my confinement, called with a bundle of American newspapers. No one, unless he has undergone a close imprisonment in a foreign country, can appreciate such a treat as a file of newspapers affords. I read and re-read them, advertisements and all, and the different familiar names I saw carried me back to other and happier days.

The next morning Mr Mayer again called with a box of excellent cigars and several bottles of wine, a present from

\* Six and a quarter cents.



Mr. Ellis. Mr. Falconer, too, who had been on a visit to Real del Monte, made me a call, regardless of the danger he incurred of contracting the contagious diseases which prevailed in San Lazaro. I cannot too highly appreciate the kindness of Mr. Mayer, Mr. Black, and many other Americans who called upon me while at that loathsome prison—their visits, which certainly were fraught with no little peril to themselves, served to beguile many a heavy hour, and alleviate an imprisonment which would otherwise have been insupportable.

Mr. Falconer brought me a number of excellent books—among them several of Mrs. Howitt's simple and beautifully-written tales, and Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield. I had read the latter frequently, but the circumstances under which I was now placed imparted to it unwonted charms. Surely I never before had appreciated this *chef-d'œuvre* of that great master of English composition. The simplicity and graceful ease of the style, its quiet and playful humour, its touching pathos, and the interest of the narrative quite enchained me. I almost forgot the painful situation in which I myself was placed while reading the trials and afflictions of the pure and pious vicar.

From the 4th to the 8th of March our time passed without any incident worthy of note occurring. On the night of the last-mentioned day, about the middle watches, another unfortunate leper died in our room. He had suffered much during the twenty-four hours previous to his death, his groans filling the air, and rendering the situation of all more gloomy than ever. Again the procession of priests and assistants was in attendance, the usual ceremonies were performed, and the body was carried from the hospital and placed in the adjoining church.\*

The next morning, a Mexican officer and guard of men arrived, with orders to escort five of my companions to Santiago. I expected that I, too, should be ordered to "take up my bed and walk" with the rest; but the hospital physician had not as yet reported me well, and I was allowed

\* If all the Mexican inmates of San Lazaro were afflicted with leprosy, and we were told that such was the case, there must be three or four different species of the disease. The faces of some of the lazarinos were covered with blotches and eruptions, while their hands and feet were unmarked. Others, again, had complexions exceedingly fair and unblemished, yet their feet and hands were distorted



to remain. I was by no means desirous to change my quarters, miserable as they were; for I felt assured that I should at once be put in chains, and sent into the streets to work, if taken to Santiago. Still I was anxious to see the different members of Colonel Cooke's party; but San Lazaro had by this time, lost many of its horrors—we can soon familiarize ourselves with any spectacle, however revolting—and I preferred remaining there, at least until I was assured that better quarters awaited me elsewhere. Only seven of our original party were now left in San Lazaro, four of whom were slowly recovering from severe attacks of the small-pox.

The 10th of March was spent in cleansing and preparing the hospital for the imposing ceremonies of the day of San Lazaro, which were to take place on the morrow. The large folding doors opening to our apartment from without were closed and fastened, two small side doors only being left open to admit the immense throng who on this anniversary visit the hospital. A Yankee, with a strip of board, a hammer, and half a dozen nails, would have securely fastened this large door in half an hour—it took half a dozen Mexicans, with tools and timber enough to build a small dwelling, an entire day to perform the same operation. Not one of us could possibly divine what object these Mexican carpenters had in view all the while, until one of them told us they were fastening the door. This little circumstance will serve to show the state of many of the mechanic arts throughout Mexico. No improvements, no labour-saving machines are ever brought into requisition, but the same means to effect an object two hundred years ago are all that are known at the present day.

In the mean time, while the clumsy workmen were busy fastening the doors, the lepers were engaged in decorating

or decayed. Some of the victims of the dreadful scourge were covered, from head to foot, with sores and ulcers hideous to look at—and then there were two or three cases where the patients presented no other marks of the disease than the loss of a nose. But the most singular case of all was that of the old Spaniard—I think he was a Spaniard—whom I have previously mentioned as continually smoking his cigarritos. His flesh appeared to be entirely gone—dried up—his skin turned to a bluish purple—and his whole appearance was so strangely changed and distorted, that he more resembled an animated mummy than aught else I can compare him to. His senses he still retained, while his actions and conversation convinced us that he was a well-informed and gentlemanly man.



the interior of the room; and here the Mexicans excel. Festoons, flags, and devices, cut in paper of all colours, were hung about the walls, and the lamps were decorated in the same way. The word "*caridad*"—charity—was also neatly cut in paper and pasted about on the different utensils, and in places where it would readily strike the eye of visitors. The floor was stained with a yellow tint, and on the ceiling long strips of red, white, and blue muslin were tastefully arranged in bows and different fanciful forms, giving relief and beauty to the general appearance. Flowers also were entwined about the cots, and, considering the material with which the lepers were provided, I doubt whether any other people under the sun could have given the room an appearance as beautiful as ours presented on the occasion of which I speak.

At an early hour next morning the clothing on the different cots was changed, and the lepers commenced arraying themselves in all their finery. It was indeed strange to see these unfortunates—many of whom were standing almost upon the brink of the grave, and whose forms and faces were revolting to such a degree that the first sight could not but create the most sickly sensations—I repeat it was most wondrous strange to see them equipped in their glaring holyday finery, apparently as vain as giddy drawing-room belles, their self-esteem leading them into an extravagance of display that would have been irresistibly comic had not the circumstances of their position been otherwise so melancholy and deplorable.

As the hour of nine approached, the visitors began to assemble. Entering by one of the side doors, they would slowly walk the entire circuit of the room, examine the different inmates, bestow such presents as they had brought with them, and then depart by the door on the opposite side. This method of entering and departing was adopted to prevent that crowd and confusion which would otherwise have taken place.

By twelve o'clock the throng was immense, a continual stream of visitors, pouring into the hospital. There were gentlemen and *léperos*; priests, with their shovel-hats, and soldiers; girls with the Poblana dress—short and gaudy petticoats, fancifully-worked chemises, gay satin shoes, and no stockings—and girls with hardly any dress at all; monks and gamblers; beggars in rags, and ladies richly attired in



satins, and brilliant with diamonds; friars and vagabonds; in short, a general assortment of a population than which one more diversified does not exist. The cots occupied by myself and companions were in the corner of the room near which the throng entered, and all stopped to gaze at us with intense curiosity. Finding that almost all brought with them some present to bestow, and that we were to receive every claco, cigar, loaf of bread, or whatever was offered, I endeavoured to assume as independent an air as possible, and let them know that I did not in any way stand in need of their charity. I cordially disliked the idea of sitting, like a poor beggar at a corner, and receiving the pitiful alms of every passer; but to avoid it was impossible. To prevent wounding the feelings of those who were certainly actuated by the kindest motives, I took everything that was offered—loaves of bread, cakes, oranges, flowers, fruits, puros, cigarritos, money, and all.\*

Among the throng was a party of exceedingly well-dressed ladies, evidently belonging to the first society of Mexico. They scrutinized the Texans closely, and appeared at a loss to know who we were, and by what singular chance we happened to be confined within the dreary walls of San Lazaro. Upon our satisfying their curiosity, one of the ladies immediately sent off two of the servants who accompanied them, who returned in about an hour with a sumptuous dinner provided expressly for us. The ladies themselves did us the honour of waiting upon us, bringing the different courses with their own hands, and appeared to take a lively interest in our unfortunate situation. Who they were I was unable to ascertain—I never saw one of them afterward.

It was not until near dark that the immense throng began to diminish in the least, and as this is the only day in the year when San Lazaro is visited, all Mexico appeared to have turned out. Occasionally I mixed in with the crowd, and took the circuit of the room, but arriving at the front door invariably found one of our guard standing there to invite me back to my cot. I wished to avoid, as I said before, receiving the simple presents of the visitors, and for

\* The *puro* is the common cigar of Mexico. The ends are not pointed, as are those manufactured in Havana, but are cut square and the puros are then put in papers of eight, twelve, or sixteen. Many of them, when well cured, are very fair cigars, yet all lack the coolness and fragrance of those made in Cuba.



this reason kept away from my cot as much as possible; but when night came, and I took an account of stock, I found that I had received almost enough bread, oranges, and cakes to load a hand-cart, a hatful of cigarritos and puros, besides several dollars' worth of clacos and medios, the smallest coins of the country. These, when the kind donors were out of sight, I gave to such of my companions as really stood in need, who were sincerely thankful for such a god-send. — When night had finally set in, our room was again deserted except by its unfortunate inmates, and thus ended the 11th of March in San Lazaro.

Two days after this great celebration, a present was sent me from a Mexican lady, such as probably never before was made in the country. She is the wife of an American resident of Mexico, pretty, and exceedingly intelligent, and is well known in the city for her great vocal abilities—having frequently given concerts, and appeared with much success at the Italian Opera. She had called upon me twice while in San Lazaro, and, with the customary Mexican politeness, had offered me anything and everything in her house. The moment a person enters the dwelling of a well-bred Mexican he is told that all it contains is at his disposal—is his. In truth, one enjoys hospitalities in that Republic he does not find elsewhere; but should the traveller accept every offer of houses, furniture, horses, guns, and jewellery that is made him while journeying through Mexico, he would make a very profitable speculation by a tour in that country. Admire a horse upon which a Mexican is seated—he is yours: remark that a ring or breastpin is rare or beautiful—it is at your disposal instant. Such is Mexican etiquette—polite, but unmeaning.

The present to which I have alluded was neither more nor less than a large dish of codfish and potatoes, well cooked, and in quantity sufficient for a score of half-starved Yankees. I happened to be “raised” far enough “Down East” myself to have a natural fondness for this dish, a common and favourite one in that section of the country, and nothing the fair senora could have sent me would have been more acceptable. I warmed and rewarmed the savoury compound, morning, noon, and night, and day after day, for it lasted more than a week, and during this time the regular hospital fare found no favour in my eyes. The husband of the lady, who was a native of the seacoast of Massachusetts,



was doubtless a great lover of this Cape Cod luxury, and as I was a *paisano* of his, the senora supposed that I too was fond of it. She was certainly right in her conjectures, although I doubt whether my partiality for it would have been as great under other circumstances. The further we find ourselves from the scenes, the customs, and the *dinners* of our childhood, the more do we enjoy anything resembling them, especially the latter, which we may chance to meet in our wanderings.

On Friday, the 18th of March, one week before Good Friday, they had some kind of celebration in our room, the object of which I did not learn. I had received a copy of "Charles O'Malley" from Mr. Mayer during the day, and was busily engaged in its perusal; but even that laughable book could not entirely withdraw my attention from the scenes enacted around me.

During the day a full-length picture of our Saviour, nailed to the cross, was hung upon the wall at the opposite side of the room from where my cot was placed. Around this picture were hung several smaller ones, exhibiting the Virgin in different scenes, and also a painting of St. Lazarus. These were decorated with wreaths and festoons of flowers, and at the foot of all was an altar, having a small figure of our Saviour executed in wood, and dressed in a fashion partaking more of the modern than of the ancient or classic style—statues of the Apostles, and I believe even of their great Master himself, are sometimes seen in Mexico clad in military uniforms, with cocked-hats upon their heads! Upon the altar I have alluded to, in addition to the figure, were a number of massive candlesticks containing large wax candles, and the beauty of the grouping was tastefully enhanced by flowers, oranges stuck full of glittering flags, and covered with gold leaf, and many ingenious devices that no other people than the Mexicans know so well how to get up and arrange.

When dark came, the female lepers, dressed in all their finery, began to assemble, the numerous candles were lighted, and after all were collected, the ceremonies of the night commenced. The hospital attendants with their families, the priests attached to San Lazaro, with a few visitors, were present, and took part in a long and discordant chaunt, the like of which I am confident has never been heard beyond the walls of San Lazaro. Every line in this wild hymn



appeared to end with "*Dolores!*" and certainly more dolorous sounds can scarcely be imagined. All the lepers joined in the chorus, their harsh, croaking, and discordant voices giving an effect horribly grating to the ear. They did not sing through their noses, for many of them had none to sing through; but they gave utterance to screams and screeches which seemed not of this earth. Their appearance, too, kneeling about in groups, and with their disfigured and hideous faces lit up by the glare of numerous candles, combined with the strange and most unnatural chorus, gave the whole affair a strong resemblance to some monstrous dream of a disturbed imagination—to some midnight revel of witches and hobgoblins, held within a charnel-house. Had the lepers been arrayed in habiliments befitting their unfortunate lot, and their deportment been of a character more consonant with their condition, the effect of the whole scene would have been different; but to see the wretches flaunting in gaudy apparel, and many of them joyous under the most horrible affliction which has ever been entailed upon humanity—all this formed a picture which may be imagined, but can not be described.

The long chaunt over, the priests and attendants left the room, and now commenced a performance which was even more singular. One of the lepers brought forth a harp, and a wild and strange dance was immediately got up opposite our cots, and within ten yards of us. Many of the dancers were cripples, and the performances consisted of alternate singing and dancing. Out of such materials the reader may, perhaps, imagine the kind of exhibition we were compelled to gaze upon. I had heard of a hornpipe in fetters—here was one on crutches. The horrible orgies were continued until near midnight, and as the actors in the scene were well supplied with liquor, the wild revel grew louder and more boisterous as the hours sped along. One by one, exhausted by their efforts, they dropped off, and by the time the numerous city bells had tolled the hour of twelve, all again was quiet in our room save the groans of some more unfortunate lazarus, who, from pain and infirmity, had been unable to join in ceremonies at once partaking of the grotesque and solemn.



## CHAPTER XXXI.

Another Dance in San Lazaro.—Mexican Improvisatores.—Fondness of the Mexicans for Music.—American Visitors.—Good Friday, and a better Dinner.—Touching Incident.—Visits of our Friends prohibited.—Speculations as to the different Modes of Escaping from San Lazaro.—The Foreigners once more permitted to visit us.—News of the Appearance of an American Fleet upon the Mexican Coast.—A severe Epidemic in San Lazaro.—A second Midnight Funeral.—Rarity of the Atmosphere of Mexico.—A regular Uproar in San Lazaro.—José Maria and his inhuman and vicious Conduct.—Farther Annoyances from José Maria.—Prospects of Release.—Santa Anna's Reasons for not liberating us immediately.—General Thompson at Vera Cruz.—Santa Anna anxious to shuffle out of a Dilemma.—Bright Anticipations of being once more at Liberty.—Arrival of General Thompson in Mexico.—The Annoyance of Suspense.—Visit of General Thompson to San Lazaro.—A Visit from Mr. Perrin.—Prospects of Liberation again clouded.—An Opportunity of Escape thrown in my Way.

On the Sunday night following the strange events related in my last, the lepers had another dance in the hospital, accompanied, as usual, by singing. The Mexicans are great *improvisatores*, and can rattle off rhymes at a moment's warning. A stranger is frequently struck with surprise, at a fandango, when he hears one of the dancers commence a song the words of which relate exclusively to himself, and which, of course, is "got up" expressly on his account. The copiousness of the Spanish language gives the greatest facility to rhymesters; but the verses of the lower orders are generally made up of senseless jingle, abounding with unmeaning tropes, absurd metaphors, or the most outrageous inconsistencies.

One little incident occurred during this evening which may be worthy of notice. While a couple were dancing face to face, with a species of shuffling, break-down step, the plank in the floor upon which they were performing their *pas de deux* suddenly gave way, and amid screams and scam-



bling both disappeared in the dark and gloomy cellar beneath. After some little exertion on the part of their friends they were extricated, and fortunately neither was so much injured but that they immediately chose a fresh plank and recommenced their dance and song.

Out of San Lazaro, I have heard singing among the lower orders of Mexicans which was extremely harmonious and pleasing. Without the slightest knowledge of music, as a science, the common people are still fond of carolling the little airs of the country in chorus, and have ears exquisitely correct in singing the different parts. Frequently, while upon the road, might the closely-tied and strictly-guarded Mexican prisoners, or *volunteers*, be heard giving their native songs and choruses with most pleasing effect. One would think that these unfortunate men, after a long day's march, would be more inclined to sleep than to sing; but such was not the case. On the contrary, some dozen or fifteen of them, seated upon the ground after their scanty supper, would join in a melody which floated sweetly on the evening air. The different voices, from the highest falsetto to the deepest bass, were many of them of the purest and softest quality, and blended together with a harmony at once musical and soothing. Madame Calderon de la Barca, in her entertaining work upon Mexico, speaks frequently of the fondness of the lower classes for music, and of their rare gifts and great taste in singing. The fair author considers music a sixth sense with the Mexicans, and really it would seem that such is the case.

On the afternoon of the 23d of March I was visited by Mr. Mayer, accompanied by Mr. Elliot, who had been chaplain to the United States' exploring expedition, and a young American named Weed, who had been travelling some two years in Mexico and the South American republics. They passed the whole afternoon with me, and so far as regards myself, three or four hours have seldom been whiled away more agreeably. We all had many anecdotes of travel to relate, most of them amusing, and night had fairly set in before my friends were admonished that it was time to depart. That quarter of the city in which San Lazaro is situated is notorious as being frequented by robbers of the worst class, fellows who would have little hesitation in taking life for a few dollars; hence there is danger in traversing it after night-fall, unless well armed; and as my visitors had not taken



that precaution on setting out, they now hurried their departure. Should any of them chance to peruse this chapter, they will recollect the afternoon they spent with me at San Lazaro, and the merry time we passed—I never once thought that I was a prisoner until I accompanied the gentlemen as far as the door, and was reminded by the guard stationed there that I could go no farther. Until some time afterward I was not aware that Mr. E. was a clerical gentleman, else there might have been more constraint and less hilarity.

Good Friday passed in San Lazaro with no incident to mark it, save that a better dinner was provided for us than usual. We had fish served in different modes, frijoles and other vegetables, all of them well cooked. The fast-days we always preferred to the feast-days ; for in the absence of meats they invariably gave us far better fare in every other respect.

Here I will relate a little incident which occurred one morning in the hospital, and which occasioned me not a little annoyance. Among the unfortunate *lazarinos* was one poor fellow, fast verging towards the grave, who, for getting intoxicated and afterward quarrelling, was sentenced to wear a long and heavy chain. The leper had lost a part of his nose and almost all his powers of speech—in fact, was only able to articulate a few words intelligibly, and these in a tone harsh and frightfully discordant. While yet stupified by liquor and lost to all feeling of shame, he appeared to care little for the disgrace which had been inflicted upon him, but, on becoming sober, his countenance plainly denoted that the iron entered into his soul, and occasioned him much distress, not only of body but of mind.

The chain was tightly riveted to his right ankle, and whenever he left his cot for the cocina or kitchen, where the lepers warmed their food and made their chocolate, he was obliged to drag it after him. While passing my cot, on the occasion I have alluded to, his face wore an expression unusually lugubrious—so grotesque yet piteous, that I had much difficulty in repressing a smile. It would seem no easy task to read a man's countenance when it wants a nose ; but in the present instance the eye had a peculiar expression that was a complete key to his thoughts. He appeared to divine what was running in my mind, came to a halt, and turned upon me another look—a look which denoted that he deeply felt the disgrace of wearing the galling chain, and which it was



evident he also intended as an appeal to my sympathy. There was something so ludicrous, however, although mournful, in this look—something in which the comic was so strangely mixed with the serious—that for the life of me I could not resist laughing. This was too much for the leper. He drew back the foot on which the chain was attached; gave me a glance full of reproach for my want of feeling; and then, by a violent kick, sent the instrument of his disgrace clanking across the floor. He then gave another upbraiding glance, uttered with much effort the worst oath in the Spanish language, and stalked off, dragging his chain after him. Once only he turned his eye towards me, as if to ascertain the effect his singular movements had wrought; and if my own face betokened the workings of my mind, I am confident the leper was satisfied. I felt vexed with myself to think that I had unnecessarily wounded the feelings of one upon whom misfortune had laid her hand so heavily—one whose situation called rather for pity than ridicule—and I resolved never again to give him cause to reprove me for want of sensibility. The leper appeared to see contrition in my countenance; and as he afterward manifested no ill feeling towards me, I had the satisfaction of knowing that I had made him sufficient atonement.

From the 22d of March to the 6th of April not a person was allowed to visit us at San Lazaro, the authorities having taken some whim into their heads which induced them to forbid our friends holding any communication with us. During this long interval—long at least to one confined—I determined upon making an escape if possible. So long as my friends were permitted to have personal interviews with me, and daily held out hopes that I should be speedily liberated, so long my situation was endurable, although my better judgment taught me to believe many of these hopes delusive; but now that I was *incomunicado*—now that all intercourse with my friends was cut off through some trifling caprice, my situation became irksome in the extreme.

There were three ways by which an escape could be effected from San Lazaro. The most feasible plan, or rather the one that would require no Mexican accomplices, would be the most perilous; but liberty was then worth all the hazards I should be compelled to run. The plan was this: attached to the hospital was a small yard, which we were allowed to visit at all times during the day, and in fact



until dark. At this time our guard was changed, the new serjeant locking the door which led to the yard, for the night. The yard was surrounded by a wall about twenty feet high, and there was one place where the top could be attained with little difficulty, by means of an outbuilding which had partly fallen to decay. Once upon the top, a person with sound limbs would run little risk in jumping to the ground; but as my ankle was still tender, from the effects of the severe injury I had received in Texas, I was fearful about hazarding the jump. Outside the walls was the immense plain stretching towards Guadalupe, San Lazaro being at the extreme edge of the city; yet a walk of a few steps would take me to the head of a street leading directly into the heart of Mexico. All I wanted was some friend to smuggle a rope into my hands, which I could in some way fasten to the wall, and thus let myself down in safety. At dusk, and just as the new guard were about locking us in, I could slip stealthily into the yard, effect my escape over the wall, and then, by having a friend at the head of the first street next the hospital to conduct me, reach some safe quarters in the city. This plan gave every promise of success. Should I be missed immediately, all would be over with me; but with five minutes' start, I could reach an asylum secure from the guards.

Another plan I agitated in my own mind was to bribe the guard to let me pass out during the night, and still another was to induce the old major-domo of the establishment to leave a door which led from the upper part of our room into the street, open at night. This door had an alphabetical lock, the secret of which was known only to him; had it been secured by an ordinary lock, I could find means to procure false keys, in which case it would afford an easy and safe means of escape. In the mean time I had had a map of the Mexican country in my possession for several weeks, which I had studied so thoroughly that I was well acquainted with the geography of every section. My intentions were, instead of endeavouring to escape by way of the Atlantic, to make at once for Acapulco or some port on the Pacific, thence by some of the coasting vessels to Callao, where I should be able to find a vessel up for the United States; but in the midst of all these calculations circumstances occurred which for a time drove all thoughts of effecting an escape from my mind.

On the 6th of April several foreigners obtained permission



to visit us, bringing with them a number of papers from the United States, and also news that a large American naval force was concentrating in the Gulf, and that several men-of-war were already lying off Sacrificios, near Vera Cruz. From the tone of the journals brought me I could plainly see that my friends throughout the United States were moving with great spirit in my behalf, and pressing upon the government the necessity and justice of making an immediate and imperative demand for my release. This was all I wanted. I was anxious that some definite action in my case should be at once resorted to, that I might know what to expect, and that the annoying uncertainty which now pressed me down might be removed.\*

I mentioned the fact of my contemplating an immediate escape from San Lazaro to my friends. They advised me to give up all thoughts of the attempt, at least for the present. Should circumstances render it necessary to escape, they promised me every assistance; but as now there certainly was a probability of prompt action being taken in my case, they recommended me to give up the idea until the result should be known. With this advice, they left me to pore over the files of papers they had brought for my amusement.

About this time a severe epidemic broke out in the hospital, and I believe was general throughout Mexico, in the form of a cold, accompanied by a distressing cough. Every leper was more or less affected, and the Texans, too, came in for a full share of the malady. There is nothing interesting about a cough even when a person has a good set of lungs and other appointments to give it full effect; but among the unfortunate lepers, many of whom were destitute of noses, and whose throats were severely affected by the disease which was fast hurrying them to the grave, the strangling noises uttered were of a nature the most horrible. Night after night I was

\* While all my editorial brethren throughout the United States spoke as with one voice in my behalf, during the unjust imprisonment I was subjected to, it may appear invidious to single out one as more deserving of my gratitude; yet I cannot, while returning my warmest thanks to all, resist mentioning the name of Mr. Bullitt, the able and warm-hearted editor of the New Orleans Bee. He, perhaps, knew more of my intentions on first starting for Texas and Mexico, was better enabled to judge of the injustice of imprisoning and detaining me, than any of his compeers, and as a consequence he was more strenuous and untiring in his endeavours to procure my release.



kept awake by sounds the most distressing, the poor fellows apparently in strong convulsions during the paroxysms, and some one of them appearing at all times ready to commence the moment another would obtain a short relief. In this way a continual din and harassing clamour were kept up, and the nights we now spent in San Lazaro were among the most annoying of all our imprisonment.

From the 6th to the 14th of April our time passed heavily and drearily. One poor leper died in our room during this interval, a dreadful cough cutting short days to which his deplorable malady would inevitably have soon put an end. Whether he had more money or influence than some of the unfortunates who had here ended the journey of life before him, I know not ; but the night ceremonies on the occasion were upon a scale more grand and imposing than were those which took place at the death of any other leper who died during my imprisonment in the hospital. The procession of priests and attendants was larger, there were more candles burning, and they appeared to shed even a more lurid glare upon the wan and gloomy countenances of the lepers in the farther parts of the room. At every interval when the paroxysms of coughing left them, the lepers muttered prayers for the repose of their departed comrade, and smote their breasts violently, as if in penance for their own unconfessed transgressions. Amid low, murmured prayers, the burning of incense, and the monotonous ringing of a bell, the procession left our room, and again all was gloom ; a dismal quiet reigned, broken only by the frightful coughs which were heard on every side—the sufferers apparently half strangled with the paroxysms. There is a rarity in the atmosphere of Mexico, at certain seasons, which makes respiration difficult ; and in addition to a slight cough which I had at the time, I suffered from a difficulty of breathing, closely allied to the asthma, which gave me much annoyance.

During the afternoon and evening of the 14th of April, there was a grand uproar in our room, in which one of our guard received a severe flogging from the corporal. The duty of the soldier on guard was to walk, with his musket at a shoulder, directly in front of our cots, both day and night. On the afternoon I refer to, a gambling leper, on the opposite side of the room, had opened a game of *monte* upon his cot, and as the guard had that day been paid off,



he found ready customers and patrons in every one of them. A knot of soldiers and lepers were congregated around him during the afternoon, and among them the corporal of our guard had taken a hand and finally lost, not only his own pay, but that of such of his men as were willing to lend him.

A more ill-natured, morose, and vicious fellow, than this corporal I had not met during all the intercourse I was forced to hold with the soldiery of Mexico. His features and expression proclaimed him a petty tyrant of the worst description; for there was a lurking malice in his eye, a sinister expression in his mahogany-coloured countenance, that as plainly denoted his character as a sign over a grocer's door tells the passers-by that sugar or coffee may be purchased within. The fellow took every occasion to annoy us—would prevent our friends from entering our room when they called—deprived us of every liberty in his power, and, in short, made himself odious to all. His name was José Maria; and here I would remark that José Maria is the John Smith of Mexico. Call the name in almost any crowd you may meet, you will find José Marias ready to respond.

When the wretch had lost his own money, and could borrow no more, he appeared to lose all command of his bad passions. One of our party, against whom he had some ill-will, he drove to his bed, and soon after ordered his own men to leave the gambling cot of the leper, and by this means "blocked the game;" but no sooner had he left the room for a few moments than the cards were again produced, and the game resumed. On returning, and finding his men once more engaged, he drew the stick which all the corporals in Mexico carry, and belaboured them most unmercifully—and all to gratify his own malicious passions. This closed the game a second time, but no sooner was his back turned than it was again recommenced. One of his men had won by three or four successful bets, some ten or fifteen dollars, all of which he had staked on the turn of a single card. The game of *monte* closely resembles *faro*, and the leper had hardly commenced dealing before José Maria again made his appearance. Walking stealthily to the cot, the wretch raised his stick, and uttered a horrible oath. The poor soldier who had staked his all saw the impending blow, but, Mexican-like, his love of the



game overcame all fears of the pain and disgrace of a beating, and he continued to watch the cards as the leper slowly turned them over, one by one. José Maria now struck him a violent blow upon the back. He shrugged his shoulders, but still watched the game with as much intentness as ever. Another and another blow followed in quick succession, and still the soldier made no other motion than a slight flinching as the stick fell heavily upon his head or back. The ungovernable passion of the corporal appeared to gain fresh strength from the stoical indifference of the soldier, and he now belaboured the poor fellow with blows that cut to the very quick; but still he did not move. His all depended upon the turn of a card, and neither blows nor threats could drive him from his watch of the game. An unlucky turn at length decided the bet against him, and now for the first time he turned his head. It was only to give a look of stern defiance at his cruel oppressor, for he did not dare strike back, and then coolly to walk off. Exhausted with his efforts, and pale from exertion and passion, José Maria also left the spot, and quiet was once more restored.

I have related this anecdote to show how deep-seated is the passion for gaming in Mexico. From the *lepero*\* to the highest dignitary—men and women, all or nearly all, are alike afflicted with the passion. They manifest, too, the greatest indifference to loss, and instances are daily occurring where a man will lose his hat, shoes, blanket, and even the very shirt from his back, with a coolness and nonchalance which in any other situation would be highly commendable. He fears no pain or disgrace—starvation he looks upon with perfect indifference—in short, so strong and deep-seated is his passion for any game of chance, that the Mexican will stake a month's food in advance upon the single turn of a card, even were he to know that starvation would be the inevitable result of an unlucky deal. That there are many gentlemen in Mexico who do not gamble I have little doubt; but as a general rule, all classes are more or less addicted to games of chance.

For hours after the strange scene at the cot of the gambling leper, sleep did not visit my eyelids. A continued succession of horrid sounds from the lepers around me—sounds intended for coughs, but which resembled more the

\* The *lepero* is the *loafer* of Mexico, not one afflicted with leprosy, as many of my readers may imagine. The latter are called *lazarinos*.



last rattling struggles of dying men—would have prevented sleep; but to these were added an extreme difficulty of respiration on my own part, and the unceasing annoyances of José Maria. The wretch had seen that we took part in the general dissatisfaction manifested at his inhuman conduct, and sought his revenge by counting us every half-hour until after midnight. Not content with simply examining each cot closely, he held a lantern directly in our faces, so that the light could not but awaken us even had we been ever so much disposed to sleep. It was not until he himself became completely weary with too much watching that he ceased his annoying attentions, after which I was enabled to fall into a doze.

At an early hour the next morning, even before the sun had risen, I was awakened by a hearty shake of my shoulders. On opening my eyes I was not a little astonished on seeing Mr. Mayer sitting by the side of me on my narrow cot. The unusual hour and the fact that his face wore an expression of much satisfaction, convinced me that he was the bearer of glad tidings, and with not a little curiosity I inquired of him the news.

Mr. M. informed me that there was now every prospect of my speedy liberation, together with five or six of the other prisoners who had claimed American protection. He farther stated that Mr. Ellis had had an interview with Santa Anna, at which the latter manifested a disposition to give an order for our release so soon as certain movements on the part of the American government, and some of its citizens, could be satisfactorily explained. Among these, Santa Anna referred to the fact that a number of United States men-of-war had either anchored or been seen off Sacrificios, and to a rumour that young Frank Combs had entered Texas from the United States with a body of men, whose intention was to invade the Mexican territory. He farther mentioned the case of young Spencer, whose movements in New Orleans and Texas at that time were of a suspicious nature, and that there might be some design against Mexico at the bottom of them.

That all these circumstances could be so satisfactorily explained as in no way to compromise the dignity of either Mexico or the United States, Mr. Mayer expressed himself confident, and at the same time congratulated me upon the prospect of once more regaining that liberty of which I had



now been deprived for seven months. After informing me in addition, that General Waddy Thompson, the new minister to Mexico, had arrived at Vera Cruz, and was then on the road to the capital, and promising to call upon me the next day, Mr. M. left San Lazaro.

That I was not a little elated by this favourable turn in my affairs may be readily imagined. I had all along believed that Santa Anna would keep me in confinement so long as he could find any pretext for such a course; but that the moment he found he could no longer detain me, he would find some excuse for granting my release. He now saw that the subject of our imprisonment had excited a lively interest in the United States; that meetings were held at different points, having for their object a call upon the government to demand the immediate and unconditional release of such Americans as were entitled to its protection; and that several of the state legislative assemblies had passed strong resolutions to that effect—resolutions which must, sooner or later, drive the naturally tardy General Government into other measures than mere argument in order to secure the liberation of its citizens. He moreover was aware that General Thompson, a gentleman whose character for promptness and decision was well known, was now on his way to Mexico as the accredited minister of the United States, and he naturally enough supposed, from the tone of the public journals, that he must bring with him stronger instructions in relation to our release than any which had been sent to Mr. Ellis. With all these circumstances staring him in the face, it was plain enough that Santa Anna was disposed to shuffle out of a dilemma in which he found himself involved; and to do it with as good a grace as possible, and to preserve the dignity of the great Mexican nation spotless, he now concluded to get rid of us on the best terms he could make. Hence his artful *ruse* to have the facts I have alluded to above—those in relation to the squadron, young Coombs and Spencer—accounted for, knowing all the while that there was really nothing in them to arouse the suspicions of his government.

But even should Santa Anna refuse to grant my release, I still had the satisfaction of knowing that my individual case would be definitely acted upon—that I must shortly know my fate, whatever it might be. Should the Mexican government still refuse to give me up, I had made every arrangement to effect an escape. In doing this, I had studiously



avoided implicating any member of the United States' legation, but had found friends among the foreigners who promised to assist me in any way. Money, that great talisman, I had at my command to an amount that would open any prison-door in Mexico; and in addition to this, the escape over the wall, a mode I had previously described, was open so long as I remained in San Lazaro. Under all these encouraging circumstances, it will be imagined that my spirits were not a little raised, and that my mind was relieved of many apprehensions by the bright anticipations of once more regaining my liberty, either through the influence of my government or by my own individual exertions.

It was on Friday, the 15th of April, that Mr. Mayer called upon me with the good news just related. During the day I received no other visits, but on the afternoon of the next, Mr. M. again called, and this time in company with two or three American citizens. He said there had been no farther action in relation to my release, but that there probably would be that evening, and that I should be made acquainted with the result immediately.

From the Americans I learned that General Thompson was expected that evening in the stage from Vera Cruz, and that a large party of them had come out as far as San Lazaro, by which the stage passed, to meet and escort him into the city. While we were speaking of the circumstances, the distant rumbling of wheels was heard. My friends immediately retired, but not until they had promised to visit me again before dark.

Shortly after their departure I could plainly hear the stage, in which was the new minister with his suite, rattling by the hospital, and making its way towards the centre of the city. To me there was something unusually enlivening in the sounds, for I well knew that I was now soon to be relieved of the annoying suspense which had long weighed upon me like an incubus. There are few men who have had the opportunity of feeling the harassing annoyance of suspense to the degree I had experienced for the last two months. Imprisoned unjustly in one of the vilest holes in Christendom—surrounded by loathsome wretches, whose very aspect was enough to drive one almost to desperation—shut out completely from the world—taunted almost daily by my Texan comrades with invidious comparisons between my own government and that of Great Britain in looking after the



rights of their subjects, and half convinced, as I was, that the former was not moving with that promptness the case demanded, I was also suffering under an indisposition which was far from inconsiderable ; and when to all this is added the circumstance that during much of this period I had little hope of a change, except such change as is found in chains and and labour, the reader may easily imagine the irksomeness of my situation. But now the time had arrived when the dark curtain of suspense was to be raised—a suspense so torturing that a sentence to ten years' imprisonment would have been almost a relief—now my position was about to be defined in some way, and I certainly felt an elevation of spirits I had been a stranger to for months.

At sunset two of my friends returned, bringing me a large file of papers, and word from General Thompson that he would visit me early next morning. I spent hours in poring over the papers from different quarters of the United States, and absolutely forgot my troubles as I read the many articles I found in them relating to my own case, and saw the warm interest taken in my behalf by my editorial brethren throughout the country.

Shortly after breakfast the next morning I was visited in San Lazaro by General Thompson himself. I was reading when he entered, seated with my feet resting against a large medicine-chest in the centre of the room. On seeing him at the door, I advanced to meet him. He inquired the nature of the diseases in the hospital, and on my informing him that we had none other than leprosy and small pox, he obtained, through the assistance of Mr. Mayer, permission for me to walk with him as far as the front door of the building, where there were several benches or seats. Accompanying General T. were Lieutenant Faunce, of our revenue service, and Messrs. Coolidge of Boston, and Perrin of New-Orleans. These gentlemen brought me a large package of letters from my friends, and expressed the greatest confidence that I should return with them to the United States.

General Thompson asked me every particular in relation to my arrest and subsequent imprisonment—promised to exert himself to the utmost in procuring my unconditional release—and moreover said that he would endeavour, at least, to obtain an order for my removal to other and better quarters forthwith. If possible, he intended to procure my release upon parole until my case could be definitely settled



one way or the other, pledging himself to give me up whenever the Mexican government might call for me. After a little farther consideration the new minister and his party took their leave.

With spirits elated I returned to my gloomy quarters, passing much of the day in perusing and reperusing the letters from my friends. There is something at all times soothing and grateful to the feelings in receiving one of these written tokens of attachment—something which convinces that you are not forgotten—that you still hold a place in the memory of those endeared to you by ties of friendship; but how doubly grateful to me were these kind evidences of regard—the first I had received for nearly a year. They carried me back to other and happier days—to scenes I had strong hopes of soon visiting—and I almost fancied myself free as I scanned their pages. But alas! how often is the cup of happiness dashed from our lips when we have it within our very grasp. Thirty-six hours after I was indulging in these pleasing anticipations, and while bright hope was opening to me a prospect of the most flattering nature, I was plunged into the very lowest depths of uncertainty—I may almost say of despair.

On the morning of the 18th of April, the day after General Thompson's visit, Mr. Perrin called upon me at San Lazaro. From his conversation, although he endeavoured to offer me hope, I could plainly enough see that the chances of attaining my liberty were not as favourable as they had been some two or three days before. The partial promise to release me, given to Mr. Ellis by Santa Anna on the 14th, the latter had probably found some means to evade entirely or to defer, and I was confident he would temporize to an extent which no other diplomacy than Mexican can ever hope to equal. In that particular branch of diplomatic science—deferring or “putting off” the main question—the Mexicans excel even the Chinese.

On leaving me, Mr. Perrin advised that I should make no attempt to escape, at least until General Thompson had been duly received as the accredited minister of the United States; but a circumstance which occurred soon after he left the hospital determined me to make the attempt at once. While walking in the little yard which we were allowed to visit during the day, I noticed, standing against the wall, a long pole, strong enough to bear my weight, and at equal dis-



tances, and about one yard apart, were placed pegs. For what use this pole was originally intended I am at a loss to conjecture; at the time I looked upon it as a special interposition, as by means of it I could easily enough climb to the top of the wall, and then, after dragging it over, let myself down, without danger, on the other side. Watching an opportunity when I supposed no one was observing me, I removed the pole to one of the corners of the yard, and then returned to my quarters in the hospital. I am confident not one of the guard observed my movements, as on entering the hospital I found them all engaged in conversation with the inmates, where they could not possibly have seen me.

The fact of my having either seen or moved the pole I did not disclose to any one, not even my friends. My plan was, in case any of the foreigners called upon me in the afternoon, to divulge the circumstances I have mentioned to some one of them who knew the city well, and ask for his assistance in enabling me to escape. All I wished him to do was simply to name either the first or second street, running from San Lazaro, that led directly into the city, and place himself at the head of it at dark, dressed in such a manner that I might easily distinguish him. I then intended to risk the danger of being observed while clambering over the wall. The attempt was to be made at twilight, and just before the time at which the door leading to the yard was generally locked for the night.

In order to be every way in readiness, I put all my money and valuables in my pockets, intending to leave my clothing, books, &c., to any one who might take them. All these arrangements made, I now awaited, with not a little anxiety, the arrival of some one of my friends, to whom I might confide my secret and upon whose assistance I might depend.



## CHAPTER XXXII.

One of the Santiago Prisoners brought to San Lazaro, sick with the Small-pox.—Arrival of a Guard of Soldiers at San Lazaro.—Ordered to prepare for Departure.—Leave San Lazaro.—“Farewells” of the Texans and “Adios” of the Lepers.—Gloomy and mysterious night march.—Interior of the City of Mexico.—Arrive at our Destination.—Farther Uncertainty.—The Mystery unravelled.—Find myself in Santiago, and among Friends.—Ordered to make choice of a Partner in Chains.—Major Bennett quotes Scripture again.—Determination to escape.—Santa Anna’s Motives in the Removal to San Lazaro.—Action of the Mexican and United States Governments in relation to the American Prisoners.—Strange Conduct of Santa Anna.—The “Secrets of our Prison-house.”—Character of the old Commandante of Santiago.—Texan Tricks upon a Mexican Blacksmith.—The Blacksmith and Santa Anna in Converse.—Description of Santiago, and Chances of an Escape.

The hours after dinner dragged heavily along, but no one called to whom I could make known my contemplated escape. About the middle of the afternoon a young man named Bowen, one of Colonel Cooke’s party, was brought to San Lazaro from Santiago, very ill with the small-pox. He was delirious, giving incoherent answers to the different questions asked him.

Night finally set in, yet not a single foreigner made his appearance. This was the more remarkable, as several of them had promised to call upon me that afternoon. There appeared to be a strange fatality in the circumstance, that at the very time when I most wanted to see the face of a friend, no one came; but there was no help for it, and I saw the door locked with a heart made heavy by disappointment. The only consolation I had was, that the same opportunity to escape would probably be open on the ensuing day, and with this consideration I retired to my cot and soon fell asleep.

About half past nine o’clock at night I was awakened by a heavy tramp, as of men marching past me. On opening my eyes, I saw eight or ten soldiers paraded directly in front



of my cot, with shouldered muskets. Not a little astonished at a circumstance so unusual, I was about to inquire the cause, when the officer in command of the party, after asking my name, said I must immediately prepare to leave San Lazaro.

I asked him whither I was to be taken, but he gave me no answer. There was something mysterious in the air of this man that caused me much uneasiness, but I was completely in his power and could only obey his commands. While I was hastily slipping on my clothes, and packing my books and other articles in a carpet bag, the lepers congregated about me with not a little astonishment depicted in their dismal countenances. I had formed a kind of distant intimacy with many of the unfortunate wretches, and their surprise was equal to my own on learning that "Don Jorge," as they called me, was about to be taken from San Lazaro under so strong a guard, and at an hour so strange and unreasonable. I thought of my dealings with the pole, and for a moment supposed that this unusual movement might be caused by my having been discovered in the act; but of this I was uncertain.

After a few hasty preparations, I told the officer I was ready to accompany him; but first I asked him if he would allow me to ride. He immediately ordered his men to bring in a litter, and pointing to it, told me I could ride in that. The litter had a vile, filthy blanket in it, and had evidently been used to transport some worthless or wounded lépero to a hospital or dungeon; but what gave me more uneasiness than all were the words "*Carcel de Ciudad*"—city prison—painted upon its sides. That I was to be taken to some vile hole, and thrown alone among the most worthless and abandoned wretches, was now evident enough, and I could scarcely restrain a shudder at the thought of a fate so horrible.

Again I asked the officer if he would send one of his men or a coach, telling him that I had money to pay for it, and one of my ankles was so weak that I was fearful, from not having taken much exercise of late, of its failure if I had far to walk. He only answered me by pointing to the litter. Determined, under no circumstances, to ride or be carried in a conveyance so vile, I told him I would endeavour to walk. My mattress and blankets, which were my own property, together with the carpet bag, were now thrown into the



litter, the guard formed on either side of me, and amid the "adios" of the poor lepers, and the kind "farewells" of my companions, I was escorted out of San Lazaro. I turned one look, as I passed the threshold, at the companions of my imprisonment, but not a gleam of hope's sunshine could I discover in their sorrowful countenances. In moments of sudden trial or peril, how much of the mind's workings, how much of the inward emotions, can be read while hastily scanning the faces of those around us. I keenly scrutinized the features of the crowd gathered at the door to see my departure—commiseration, pity, all the kindlier feelings of man's nature were there, but not one glimmering of assurance as to the fate that awaited me could I discover, no key, to unlock the mystery in which the movements of my guard was hidden. With a heavy heart I bade the inmates of San Lazaro farewell, and I doubt whether one of them, either Mexican or Texan, expected ever to see me again.

On reaching the front door of the hospital, the officer in command ordered a halt. He then took me into the small office connected with the establishment, and gave the major-domo a receipt to the effect that I had been regularly delivered into his hands. I once more requested him to send one of the guard for a coach—a request which he only answered by pointing to the litter.

Outside the hospital, the officer now formed his men, some five or six on either side of me, a trumpeter in the rear, and himself in front. In this order we marched from San Lazaro, the course taken leading directly towards the heart of the city. For the first four or five blocks my ankle gave me little or no pain, the uncertainty which shrouded my destination probably drawing my attention from all personal inconvenience; but as we entered the better portion of the city, and were leaving the low and miserable habitations which form the outskirts of Mexico, my ankle began to give way under the unwonted exercise.

Two or three times I asked the soldiers who were marching next me whither we were going: the eternal "*quien sabe?*" was the only answer.

We had now proceeded some half or three quarters of a mile on our mysterious journey, and had entered the better part of the city, when my ankle began to pain me excessively. I stopped for a moment, and in eloquent bad Spanish told the Mexican officer my situation. He shrugged his



shoulders, and still pointed to the filthy litter, which was borne by two of his men. Had my ankle been perfectly sound at this time, such were my feelings, I should most certainly have broken through the guard which surrounded me, and put the chance of an escape upon a run, regardless of their muskets. As it was, I could but hobble along, and submit to being guarded, I knew not whither.

As we approached the centre of the city, although it was now almost eleven o'clock at night, we met numbers passing. My dress plainly denoted that I was no countryman of theirs, for I wore a blanket coat I had purchased of an American at Chihuahua, and an American hat. The sight of a foreigner thus attired, and thus strongly guarded through the streets at an hour so unreasonable, excited not a little curiosity in the passers-by, and they crowded under the lamps and peered inquisitively in my face.

We passed several churches, and once or twice we were halted for a few moments directly in front of large gloomy edifices, which I could not but think were prison-houses. I was not allowed to march upon the sidewalk, but was taken directly along the middle of the streets, where the walking was rough and uneven, and where my ankle was liable to be strained or injured at every step. Driven at length almost to desperation, not only by pain, but by the uncertainty with which I was surrounded, I forced myself between two of the soldiers who guarded me, and sat down upon the sidewalk directly in front of a large church. The officer ordered me to rise and continue the march, but I told him I could walk no farther.

Anxious, probably, to be relieved as soon as possible of his charge, the officer now consented to send one of his soldiers for a coach ; and being near one of the great coach-stands of the city, he soon returned with the conveyance I was so much in need of. I immediately entered the heavy and clumsy vehicle, the officer following and seating himself by my side. The soldiers were then formed on either side, and at a brisk pace the strange night march was resumed.

On several occasions the coach stopped for a moment, probably to give the guard rest, and each time I scanned the buildings on either side with an eager gaze, expecting to see some dismal prison. Had there been a single companion with me, for misery *does* like company, I should not have been so oppressed by the sickly feelings I experienced ; but



I was alone, and could only brood over my singular and annoying situation in silence.

A half-hour's ride carried us almost entirely through the city, and after leaving the poorer habitations of the suburbs, we emerged into the open country. Passing now and then a small house, from which some score of noisy dogs would jump and bark at us, the coach finally drew up in front of a large and gloomy establishment, walled in on two of its sides, where a halt was called. It was now near midnight. I asked the officer what building it was; but he was stepping from the coach at the time, and either did not hear or did not heed my question.

I had hardly left the coach before I heard the startling "*centinela alerta!*" from a soldier directly over my head. The cry was taken up by another in a different part of the building, then by another, until at length I could but faintly hear the long-drawn-out and to me grating sounds feebly echoed and re-echoed from the more distant walls of the building. Around the passage-way which led to the establishment, groups of soldiers, rolled up in their cloaks and blankets, were lying asleep, and a regular guard was marching backward and forward in the entrance. I was soon taken, still strongly guarded, through the main door of entrance. Once within, I found a large yard, surrounded on all sides by buildings, and by the dim light of a lamp I could plainly read the word *castigo*—punishment—over a strong and gloomy door. In this apartment, I at once thought I should find some resting-place; but who were to be my companions, or what the cause of my imprisonment, I could not imagine.

Not a little overjoyed was I when the guard, who even to this time was stationed on either side of me, marched by this dreadful room and led me up a flight of stone steps on the other side of the yard. We now groped our way along a dark passage, the floor of stone, and every footfall sending up a doleful echo. Once, by the dim light of a distant lanthorn, I saw the gloomy figures of two or three monks, slowly wending their way towards their silent cloister, and again all was darkness.

Groping his way a few steps in advance of us, the officer who had me in charge at length reached a small door, at which he knocked. A female voice within asked him for the countersign. He gave it, the door slowly opened, and I



was ushered into a small but neatly-furnished apartment, having a guitar and several pieces of music scattered about, while a sideboard and other articles of furniture graced the sides of the room. Two females were present—one a lady-like woman some thirty-five years of age, the other a pretty girl of not more than sixteen, and both were undressed as if just from bed. After they had politely beckoned me to a chair, I asked the elder for some water, which she gave me after inquiring whether I would not prefer a glass of wine. The kindness of these women gave me hope, which was soon banished, however, by the entrance from another room, of an elderly and grim-visaged officer, apparently some sixty years of age. He had a morose scowl upon his face, and his upper lip was decked with a pair of mustaches which might have been cut from a shoe-brush.

He asked my name, entered it in a book which was lying upon the table, and after telling the officer who had charge of me that all was right, ordered him, with a cold, business-like air, to march off and lock me up. By a different passage I was now taken to the yard below, and halted in front of a large and strong door. A key was applied to the lock, and while they were slowly turning it I could plainly hear the clanking of chains and the indistinct hum of voices within. This was the most trying moment of all, for I was profoundly ignorant alike of the place and of the companions I was to be associated with.

The door was at length opened. A loud shout arose as I entered the room, and my name was called by fifty voices in a breath. Never can I forget my own feelings when, with spirits but a few moments before depressed by a suspense the most harrowing, I now found myself suddenly and most unexpectedly in Santiago, greeted by Colonel Cooke, Dr. Brenham, Captain Suttan, and the friends whom I had not seen for seven months. The prospect of chains and servitude was as nothing—I was among my old companions.

By far the greater number of the prisoners were asleep when I entered the room; yet there were some twenty still awake, engaged at cards upon the stone floor, or reading by the dim light of Mexican candles. After half an hour's conversation with my friends, I spread my cot among them—a refreshing sleep following a day replete with excitement.

Immediately after breakfast the next morning, the Mexican who had charge of the Texan chain gang politely requested



me to choose a partner from among the prisoners—some one to assist me in carrying the heavy fetters which were now to decorate one of my ankles for the first time. The recollection of the favourable opportunity I had to escape from San Lazaro the day before now flashed across my mind, and I deeply regretted that fate had prevented me from improving it; but as this was no time to speculate long on the past, or indulge in idle regrets, I commenced a survey of my fellow-prisoners with the intention of making a choice. It fell upon the veteran Major Bennett, of scripture-quoting memory. One end of his chain was vacant, owing to the sickness of his comrade at the time; but what induced me more particularly to make choice of him, was a sly wink he gave me, and a side speech to the effect that he had a way of ridding himself of the fetters which few of the Texans possessed.

We were now conducted to a small room, adjoining that in which the prisoners were locked up for the night. Here an anvil had been placed for the business, and the room was decorated with rings, rivets, chains, and other instruments of disgrace. I slipped a dollar into the hands of the Mexican whose duty it was to fasten the trinkets upon me. This I had been advised to do by my friends, as it would induce the fellow, either to give me a ring so large that I could slip it off, or so to fasten the rivet that I could remove it with but little difficulty. The dollar had the desired effect, for the Mexican selected a ring which I could easily remove after taking off my boot.

With as good a grace as I could assume—for this chaining a man excites any feelings but those of a pleasant nature—I now submitted to the operation. The chain was some eight feet in length, extremely heavy, and one of the class used to draw logs with oxen—in other words, a log chain. After cutting the straps from a pair of fashionable, French pantaloons, which I had purchased at Zacatecas, I placed my foot upon the anvil, and the Mexican although well knowing that I could shake myself free with ease, hammered away and made as much noise as though the chain was to remain upon my ankle for life.

A knot of my fellow-prisoners gathered about me during the operation, and made themselves exceedingly facetious at my expense. One of them accompanying the remark with a shake of his foot that made his own chain clank again,



assured me that I should find it agreeable enough *after* I got used to it. Another said it was not half so bad as pulling teeth; and still another remarked that chaining one's leg was far less painful than sawing it off. A musical genius commenced humming Bruce's Address, laying emphatic stress upon the line

“Chains and slavery;”

while another individual, gifted slightly with vocal abilities, essayed the ditty commencing with

“Liberty for me.”

Even Major Bennett, although not much given to humorous remarks, could not resist the opportunity of being facetious. With a gravity which would have become a graven image, he pretended to comfort me with the remark that we all have our trials and tribulations, quoted a verse from Job to the effect that useless repining was of little avail, and wound up by saying that the time would yet come when our bonds would all be rent asunder.

While all this was in progress, I felt indignant enough fairly to eat half a dozen links of the chain attached to my ankle, but I still forced a laugh, and assumed a cheerfulness of demeanour when I felt much more like shedding tears from very vexation. Thoughts, too, of an escape, of an immediate escape, ran through my mind with such rapidity that twenty half-digested plans to effect my liberty were formed and abandoned in half as many minutes. I now considered myself cut off from all hope of release through the interference of my own government, and resolved to run every risk, and go to any expense, to achieve my liberation. In this frame of mind I went back to the main room in which the prisoners were confined, myself and companion dragging the heavy chain after us. My friends congratulated me upon my appearance in the “trinkets,” and one of them, pointing to the chain, humorously remarked that I must now feel *bound* to the major by the *strongest ties*! This was on the morning of the 19th of April.

Up to this time I have never been able to fathom or ascertain Santa Anna's motives in having me removed from San Lazaro to Santiago. Clothed in mystery as the movements of the Mexicans generally are, and delighting as they do in a dark and covert policy, there was something unusually



strange in the hour chosen, the strong guard sent to secure my safe conduct, and the fact that the officer who commanded the guard appeared studiously to avoid giving me any clew as to my destination.

But to show my readers in what a veil of mystery the whole affair was shrouded, I will here revert to the negotiations which had been pending, for the previous three or four days, in relation to the liberation of myself, and of six other Americans who had claimed the protection of the United States government.

On the 14th of April, Mr. Ellis, who was then shortly to leave Mexico, had an interview with Santa Anna in relation to the cases of these seven Americans. At this interview, Santa Anna expressed himself willing to release the prisoners, but not until certain acts of the United States were explained. He alluded to the fact that at that time the U. S. frigate *Macedonian* was off Vera Cruz, with another American man-of-war, and said that as soon as he received information, from the commandante at Vera Cruz, that these vessels had sailed, he would be pleased to give the prisoners up to Mr. Ellis. While the vessels remained he should be prevented from releasing them, as rumours were prevalent in Mexico that the frigate brought a *demand* for the prisoners, and the Mexican public might charge him with being influenced by their presence in granting a release—in other words, with being frightened into the measure. The result of this interview, which was considered at the time as very favourable to my release, induced Mr. Mayer to call upon me early the next morning with the news—a circumstance I have mentioned in the previous chapter.

On the 16th of April, two days after this interview, Mr. Mayer called upon the Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations, José Maria de Bocanegra. This call was made about twelve o'clock, at the request of Mr. Ellis, and with the object of ascertaining the farther action of the Mexican government upon the subject of our release. M. de Bocanegra informed Mr. Mayer that he could not tell him at what time the prisoners would be set at liberty, as intelligence of a very disagreeable nature had just been received by the government, which might influence the mind of Santa Anna; but in the mean time the minister requested Mr. Mayer to call upon him again the same evening, when he might expect a more definite answer upon the subject.



About five o'clock Mr. M. called again at the Foreign Office, when M. de Bocanegra enumerated five points of difficulty as to carrying into immediate effect the promise made by Santa Anna, on the 14th, to Mr. Ellis. I give these points as they were taken down in writing by Mr. M. thinking they may interest some of my readers:

*First.* That young Combs had armed, and was at the head of, a body of hostile persons, under the name of *emigrants*, advancing upon Mexico.

*Second.* That a Mr. Spencer had been sent from the United States, with despatches to Texas, and that immediately afterward, and in strange coincidence, the Texan blockade of the eastern coast of Mexico had been proclaimed.

*Third.* That Texas had proclaimed this blockade.

*Fourth.* That *all* the vessels of war had not yet left Vera Cruz.

*Fifth.* That the publications in the papers of the United States against Mexico were most unfriendly, inflammatory, and hostile.

Not thinking it his duty to enter into an argument upon these points, Mr. Mayer asked M. de Bocanegra whether the legation of the United States should consider the negotiations in regard to the release of the seven prisoners as terminated. The minister replied that they were *not* to be considered terminated. Mr. Mayer then wished to know whether the legation should consider the Mexican government as having withdrawn its word as to the release of the prisoners. The minister answered that such was not to be the interpretation—that his own government did not withdraw its word, but only “*suspended*” its operation upon the question—in short, that the “*suspension*” should only be momentary. Those acquainted with the artful, evasive, and temporizing policy of a skilful Mexican diplomatist may readily conceive that this “*momentary suspension*” might be spun out to ten years—and in this light I believe it was viewed by those who were acquainted with the circumstances. At all events, I judged, from the tone of such friends as called upon me the day after this interview, that my chance of release was as hopeless as ever, and this opinion induced me to attempt an escape over the walls of San Lazaro on the Monday following.

At the very time that I was thus contemplating an escape,



and while I was anxiously awaiting the arrival of some friend at San Lazaro who would assist me, Mr. Ellis was holding an interview with the ministers de Bocanegra and Trigeros at the Treasury Department. At this interview Mr. E. answered the *five points* which had caused the "*suspension*", of our release, as follows:

*First.* That he had positive information that Combs had gone home with his father from New-Orleans to Kentucky, and was not engaged in the Texan war upon Mexico.

*Second.* That Spencer was not a bearer of despatches from the government of the United States to Texas; but had used the title (as was rumoured) to protect himself from, or to evade, charges affecting him personally.

*Third.* That the United States had no part, influence, or concern, in the Texan blockade, and, moreover, that if the government he represented entertained hostile designs upon Mexico (which it did not), they would be manifested openly by our own forces, and not secretly, through the navy of another power.

*Fourth.* That *all* vessels of war of the United States had actually left Vera Cruz.

*Fifth.* That the prints of the United States were free—not under the control of the government—and not the organs of its opinions.

In answer to this, M. de Bocanegra wished Mr. Ellis distinctly to understand that the promise of Mexico, for the release of myself and the six other Americans, was given—it was an act concluded—and its operation only momentarily suspended. He farther stated, that he would immediately see Santa Anna, and hoped the conversation he had just held with Mr. E. would so far satisfy the President as to induce him to order the release of the prisoners previous to Mr. Ellis's departure from Mexico, and that they might then accompany him to the United States.

From all this it would seem that my release had been fully and finally determined upon, to take place, immediately; yet but a few hours afterward, and late at night, I was escorted from San Lazaro under a strong guard, and under circumstances the most annoying and mysterious, and taken to Santiago. It could hardly be for my better security, and it would seem almost impossible that any person had seen me removing the pole in the hospital yard of San Lazaro; whence I can only conjecture that the whole proceeding was



the result of one of those capricious impulses which appear to govern the conduct of Santa Anna. Perhaps he thought he had not already punished me enough, was anxious to make the most of the short time I was still to be in his power, and therefore sent me to Santiago to give me a taste of life in chains.

The floor of our room at this old convent was of stone, and in the way of furniture we had neither chairs, tables, nor beds. After receiving the *congratulations* of my friends, upon my first appearance in fetters, I threw myself upon a blanket in that quarter of the prison which had been appropriated by Colonel Cooke and Dr. Brenham. The latter immediately began scratching the earth from the chinks between two stones, and soon drew forth a small file which had been secreted there. This he gave me, with directions for filing the rivet that secured the chain to my ankle. I told him that a small bribe had procured for me a ring, which I could easily enough slip over my foot when night came. While this conversation was going on, old Major Bennett quietly released himself from his end of the chain, and stalked off to a corner to peruse some book upon which he was at the time engaged.

I was now initiated into some of the "secrets of the prison-house." The old commandante of the guard—the same person into whose quarters I had been taken the night before, and who had registered my name in the presence of two women—was tyrannical and overbearing in his disposition, and used his best exertions to keep the prisoners continually in chains. The younger officers of the guard, however, were many of them generous and kind-hearted to a fault, and not only furnished our officers with files with which to rid themselves of their irons during the night, but also winked at any trifling violation of orders, and allowed them to move about without the "trinkets" during the day—only requesting them to avoid being seen by the old commandante. The latter seldom visited the prisoners more than once during the day; and as there was always some one of them to give warning of his approach, the chains were apparently "all right and tight" whenever he entered our quarters.

Every morning a blacksmith from the city was sent to examine and fasten the chains upon each prisoner; yet such adepts had the latter become at "working in iron," that



while the knight of the anvil was securing one couple, the pair who had just passed through his hands were very likely loose from their fetters, and performing various antics and exchanging significant nods at the old fellow's expense, behind his back.

The blacksmith, it was said, received twelve and a half cents for each rivet he fastened, and as every morning he found nearly all of them loose, the job was an extremely profitable one for him. A good story was told—having, probably, as much foundation in truth, as the thousand and one legends and traditions by which the Mexican population is gulled—of an interview the old blacksmith had one morning with Santa Anna. The latter had noticed that a heavy bill was paid daily for fastening the chains of the intractable Texans, and questioned the blacksmith as to the cause. He made answer that the Texans were difficult people to deal with, and had strange ways that he could not understand. Santa Anna asked him how it was that while the simple fastening of a chain upon the ankle of a Mexican was sufficient to secure him for a twelvemonth, without putting the government to farther expense, a Texan was sure to rid himself of the same irons in twenty-four hours. This was a question the blacksmith was entirely unable to answer, farther than by informing his Excellency, the Provisional President, that “while he was busily engaged with hammer and anvil, securing one Texan, his comrade at the other end of the chain, and whom he had but just operated upon, not only worked himself free, but very likely *did so at him!*” This latter movement of the Texan the blacksmith explained to Santa Anna by putting his right thumb to his nose, and then performing certain well-known and fanciful gyrations with his fingers. As the story ran, which was of course a fabrication of some wag among the prisoners, the President and the blacksmith, profoundly ignorant of the meaning of a movement so mysterious, came to the conclusion that the Texans had dealings with the prince of darkness, and that it was labour lost to attempt to secure them further. At all events, the blacksmith suddenly ceased his morning visits, and from that time until the Texans were liberated they were only submitted to an occasional visitation from the Mexican who had charge of the parties sent into the streets to work.

The reader may recollect that on the night when I was



escorted from San Lazaro to Santiago, and while the guard who accompanied me were unlocking the door of the room in which the prisoners in the latter place were confined, I mentioned hearing a rattling and clanking of chains. It arose from the circumstance that the prisoners thought the old commandante was paying them a night visit, and on this supposition they commenced fastening their chains with all possible despatch. Upon seeing me enter the room, they shook them off with even greater celerity.

With the fastening of irons upon my ankle went all hope of my being released by Santa Anna. I could not conceive it possible, after subjecting me to this disgrace, that he had the most remote intention of giving me liberty, and accordingly made up my mind at once to attempt an escape. I openly told my friends that I would not remain in Santiago a week, let the risk be what it might, and deeply was I vexed when I recalled to mind the many unimproved opportunities to escape that had presented themselves.

Here I will attempt a description of the convent in which we were confined. It was originally intended for a religious establishment, and some ten or fifteen monks still dwelt within its walls. The front entrance was through a narrow passage-way, having heavy doors on the outer and inner sides, which were both closed at night. In this passage-way many of the soldiers forming our guard slept. It led into a large yard, having heavy stone buildings on each side, and a fountain of excellent water in the centre. The prisoners occupied rooms on two sides of the square below, the other rooms being used as a kitchen, apartments for storing, a hospital, and a room in which mass was said on Sundays. The upper stories were occupied by the monks, the commandante and his family, and by a number of crippled, invalid, and aged soldiers, veterans in the Mexican service. Outside of the building, on the side next the city, was the balcony from which Lieutenant Lubbock and the Frenchman Mazur had jumped when they made their escape, but the entrance to this balcony from within had been immediately walled up to prevent others from following in their footsteps. On the same side, a flight of stairs led from the second story to a garden below, in which the monks walked or worked during the day. This garden was surrounded by a low wall, which would have offered but a slight impediment to an escape; but a soldier was constantly



stationed at the door leading to the garden, to prevent others than the monks from passing in or out.

There was a passage-way in the rear, corresponding with that which led into the yard in front, but its doors were kept continually locked. This passage led, I believe, to a walled enclosure in which thousands of the victims of cholera were buried in 1833. The back part of our room was destitute of windows, and the walls were extremely thick, so that there was no hope of escape that way. The only means, therefore, of getting away from Santiago with any probability of success, were either to bribe the guard stationed at the front entrance; to procure false keys for the doors leading to the rear, in which case we should also have been compelled to bribe the sentinel at the door of our room; or to walk out of the door leading to the garden in open daylight, and in the disguise of a monk. The latter would have required no associate within the walls, either Texan or Mexican, and I resolved to undertake it, should no more feasible plan offer. I should have taken holy clothes, not holy orders, for a short time, or, in other words, procured a monk's gown and cowl from some one of my friends. Then, by cutting off whiskers and mustaches, of which I had cultivated a liberal quantity for the express purpose of disguising myself; by also shaving the top of my head in imitation of the holy brotherhood, and putting the gown and cowl over my other dress, I could have passed out for a respectable monk—at all events, I should have tried the experiment in case other plans failed.

I had not been in irons an hour before Dr. Brenham and myself, with one of the Texan officers, had determined upon sounding some of our guard as to whether they would pass us out in the night for a liberal sum of money. Young Sully, one of the Texans who spoke Spanish, was also let into the secret, and would have ventured with us had the attempt been made. Sully was the interpreter of the prisoners, and from constant communication with the guard knew every officer and soldier belonging to it. He had frequently hinted the subject of an escape to some of them, and from their answers felt confident that one hundred dollars would open every door in the Convent of Santiago. Having thus made up our minds to escape, we all awaited, with not a little impatience, a favourable opportunity to carry some one of our plans into effect.



At eight o'clock in the morning the Mexican having charge of the prisoners who worked in the streets made his appearance, with orders for them to be in readiness. I had expected that Santa Anna would impose street duty upon me also, and compel me to work it out; but in this I was agreeably disappointed.

It was really amusing to see the Texans setting out for their morning's work. The orders from head quarters were, that all should be sent into the streets; but it was easy enough to avoid it by feigning sickness. The larger portion preferred the fresh air and exercise outside the walls to the confinement and clozeness within, going to their labour with joyous laughs which contrasted strangely with the clanking of their chains. The latter they cared little for. "Their limbs were fettered, but their minds were free;" and a moment's reflection taught them, however much they might have been annoyed at first, that they had committed no act which as men they could be ashamed of, and consequently their chains were no disgrace. As to the work they did, it was all a mere farce: there was not one of them but could have performed the labour of a day in fifteen minutes by using mere ordinary exertion.



## CHAPTER XXXIII.

**Fare of the Texans in Santiago.—Anecdote of the Old Commandante of Santiago.—The Texans achieve a decided Victory over their Oppressor.—The Puebla Prisoners at their Tricks.—Mad Pranks of the Texans in Church.—Additional Ceremonies ingrafted upon the Catholic Ritual.—Farther Thoughts of escaping.—Action of General Thompson in my behalf.—The Foreign Policy of the United States.—Santa Anna “Laughing in his sleeve.”—Plan to bribe our Guard at Santiago.—Major Bennett and his Bible.—Character of the Anglo Saxon Race under Misfortune.—The Texans taken to their Morning Work.—More Visitors at Santiago.—Preparations for celebrating the Anniversary of the Battle of San Jacinto.—Experiments as to the smallest possible Amount of Labour a Man can perform when he exerts himself.—San Jacinto and Patriotism.—The Texans at their Celebration.—Close of the Anniversary**

The prisoners in the Convent of Santiago were comparatively well fed—far better than were their unfortunate comrades at either Puebla or Peroté, as I afterward ascertained. At Santiago, a pint of very good coffee was given to each man in the morning, with a dish of well-cooked frijoles and as much bread as he wanted. The latter was white, sweet, and brought to us fresh, the Mexicans being famous for the rare quality of their bread. For dinner, which was cooked by some of our own men, we had beef, rice, and vegetables, the former of inferior quality, as the cattle in the vicinity of Mexico are seldom fat. There was an abundance of everything, however, and seldom are prisoners of war better treated, as far as regards eating, than were the Texans at the city of Mexico.

At Puebla the case was said to be widely different, a niggardly economy prevailing in the *commissariat*. As regards clothing, too, the prisoners at Santiago were infinitely better provided for than their comrades at Puebla, for while the former were neatly and comfortably clad—I believe by



the chief magistrate of the city of Mexico—the latter received little raiment other than that supplied to them by foreigners. They were confined, too, at the Presidio, in the same patio or court-yard with two or three hundred of the vilest malefactors, and at first were even chained to them—a Mexican and Texan at either end of a long and heavy chain: but from some cause they were afterward separated, and the Texans confined together by the same fetters. The Puebla prisoners were also sent into the streets under the most oppressive taskmasters, and in company with the lowest Mexican felons and malefactors, compelled to clean the streets, gutters, filthy sewers of the city, besides undergoing other trials even more degrading.

Not so at Santiago. The old commandante, one morning, ordered the Texans to perform some debasing work, which they at once and peremptorily refused to engage in. A second time they were commanded to the task, but still they persisted in the stand they had taken. Driven almost to madness, the ill-natured officer next ordered such of them as refused the disgracing labour to step a few paces forward, at the same time muttering dark threats against such as should venture from the ranks. To his utter dismay, every man boldly stepped forward, determined to be shot at once rather than obey his orders. The old commandante fumed, fretted, and swore, and threatened to send an account of their refractory conduct to Santa Anna himself, but all to no purpose—the Texans were united and determined in the stand they had taken. This was the last time they were called upon to perform any vile office. The commandante really sent a report of the transaction to the functionary who was at that time the principal magistrate or mayor of the city; but the prisoners forwarded another account of it to the same personage, in which they declared their willingness to labour, but boldly added that they would be coerced to no debasing work. The magistrate, whose name I have forgotten, but whom all the prisoners must recollect as a gentlemanly and liberal man, admitted the justice of their conduct, and gave orders that they should never be called upon to perform such offices as the commandante had endeavoured to exact from them. Here was a decided victory gained over their oppressor, and the Texans improved it in such a way that the old and ill-natured fellow was sorry he had ever crossed them.



One would suppose the indignities and hardships heaped upon the prisoners at Puebla would break their spirits; but such was not the case—nothing could subdue their natural buoyancy of disposition. Many and amusing were the stories related of the fun and frolic they were continually “getting up” among themselves, and the tricks and jokes they perpetrated whenever an opportunity occurred. The wags who were instrumental in convening the mirthful courts at San Christobal were still among them, ever ready to extract laughter let what would happen. One anecdote I will relate—a story which is entirely too good to be lost.

Every Sunday morning, the prisoners confined at Puebla were compelled to attend mass, in chains, at one of the churches. The floors of all the religious establishments of note in Mexico are of stone or marble, without seats of any kind, and those in attendance must either kneel or stand during the ceremonies. In the present instance, the Texans were paraded in rows before the altar, and compelled to fall upon their knees while mass was said; but they were not obliged to go through all the little forms and ceremonies which the Catholic Church in Mexico exacts of its votaries, such as crossing themselves, smiting their breasts, and other outward observances. Well drilled, however, were they in all the minutiae of these demonstrations, and in addition one of the jokers, who had acted as the prosecuting attorney at Christobal, and who was a great mimic, taught them a few original “extras” and “fancy touches,” which he had ingrafted upon the regular Catholic ceremonials. So well had he disciplined his brother prisoners, that they could go through all his ritual with as much promptness and precision as could the best military company in existence go through its simplest manœuvres.

On arriving at the church, and after kneeling in front of the altar, the well-drilled Texans awaited the usual signal from the officiating priest to commence. There probably was not a Catholic among them; yet the assumed air of grave devotion to be seen in their faces would have done credit to the most rigid of that creed. At the given signal, and at the proper time, the chained prisoners would cross themselves with all seeming humility, closely imitating every motion of the priest and of the Mexicans around them; but instead of stopping with their Catholic neighbours, they



wound up by placing the right thumb to the tip of their noses, and then, with a mock gravity which might have drawn a smile from an Egyptian mummy, circled the fingers about, and all this directly in the face of the officiating priest, and without a smile upon their countenances. When the proper time came for again crossing themselves, the mischievous leader of the Texans would pass the word for his men to "come the double compound action," as he called it. This resembled the first movement, with the exception that it was more complicated and more mysterious to the surrounding Mexicans. After the right hand had gone its usual round, from forehead to breast and from shoulder to shoulder, the thumb again settled on the tip of the nose; but this time the left thumb was joined to the little finger of the right hand, and then commenced a series of fancy gyrations with all the fingers, the like of which was probably never before seen in a Catholic church. Sam Weller, I believe, or if not he, some modern philosopher of his school, defines the movement I have just described as meaning something like "This may be all very true, but we don't believe a word of it." What the Mexicans thought of it, or whether they noticed it or not, I am unable to say: it may be that they considered it as simply "a way" the Texans had, and thought no more of it. Such is the story told of the pranks played by the prisoners confined in Puebla.

During the first day of my imprisonment at Santiago we were visited by numbers of foreigners, all manifesting not a little astonishment at seeing me there, and in irony. They had not even heard of my being removed from San Lazaro, and promised to inform Mr. Ellis and General Thompson of the circumstance as soon as they returned to the city. I told them, one and all, that I would not remain in the place a week, let the risk be what it might, and even requested one of them to smuggle me a monk's habit, that I might have everything in readiness should a favourable opportunity occur of escaping in that disguise through the garden. Our friends left after a short visit, and the rest of the day I passed in dragging my chain over the stone floor, and in waiting, with not a little impatience, the return of Sully, who was in the street, with the men. I was anxious to know his success in tampering with the guard.

Among the Americans who visited us during the forenoon was Mr. Perrin. On returning to the city, he at once com-



communicated the fact of my being at Santiago, and in irons, to General Thompson. The latter had not yet been duly received as the accredited minister of the United States, but he promptly exerted himself in my behalf by calling immediately at the residence of Mr. Ellis and informing him of the facts, expressing not a little astonishment and indignation at the strange and uncalled-for conduct of the Mexican government. Here I will give an extract from General Thompson's official letter to Mr. Webster, narrating the circumstance of his visit to Mr. Ellis, which I find published in the *Madisonian* of the 30th of June, 1842 :

“ On my arrival in Mexico I was informed, and afterwards learned from Mr. Ellis, that on the 14th of April, two days before my arrival in this city, and when I was hourly expected, he had an interview with the President, Santa Anna, and had been promised the release of the American prisoners. Mr. Ellis told me, at the same time, he had no hope of the fulfilment of this promise. It was natural that Mr. Ellis should desire these prisoners to be released to him and not to me ; and as I thought the Mexican authorities would prefer that the matters should take this course, I was disposed to aid Mr. Ellis in his negotiations by every means in my power—the liberation of the prisoners being the primary object. On Tuesday, the 19th, I was not a little surprised to learn that Mr. Kendall had been removed from the hospital of San Lazaro to the Convent of Santiago, and for the first time put in chains. I immediately went to the office of Mr. Ellis, and proposed that he should write a note to the Minister of Foreign Relations, or that we should address to him a joint note on the subject. He declined doing so, saying that he had seen the minister the day before, and that he did not think any good would result. I told him I thought the subsequent placing of Mr. Kendall in irons justified and demanded it, and immediately addressed to M. de Bocanegra the Note No. 5.”

I will also give extracts from General Thompson's letter to M. de Bocanegra, referred to at the close of the passage just quoted. M. de B., it should be remembered, was at that time the Mexican Minister of Foreign relations. This letter, I believe, was written at the room of Mr. Ellis, and was despatched immediately to M. de Bocanegra. It is dated “ Mexico, April 19, 1842,” bears the signature of General Thompson alone, and appeared originally in the same number of the *Madisonian* :



"The undersigned had the honour, yesterday, to address a note to your excellency, announcing the fact of his appointment as Minister of the United States of America, near this government, and of his arrival in this city, and requesting to know when he could have the honour of being presented to the most excellent the Provisional President of Mexico. Not having received an answer to that note (of which he by no means complains), the undersigned as yet bears no official relation to this government. But having been this moment informed that a citizen of the United States, Mr. George W. Kendall, who has been confined in the hospital of San Lazaro, has been removed to the Convent of Santiago, and placed in chains, the undersigned hopes it will be his sufficient apology for his again addressing your excellency.

"The undersigned is in possession of testimony additional to that heretofore submitted to your excellency, which he believes will place beyond all doubt the facts of Mr. Kendall having had a passport, and that his purposes in his visit to Mexico were altogether pacific. The undersigned, relying (as he does) on the sincerity of the professions heretofore made to his excellency, Mr. Ellis, has no hesitation in saying that the Mexican authorities will be satisfied with this evidence, and will take pleasure in releasing Mr. Kendall."

These extracts I have copied, partly to show the effect my removal from San Lazaro to Santiago had upon my friends in Mexico, but principally to make known the deep interest taken in my behalf by General Thompson. Although at the time I had little hope of obtaining immediate liberty through the intervention of my own government, I still could not but feel grateful for the prompt and decided tone adopted by the new minister in an emergency to me so critical.

I could not, at the time, look upon the course pursued by Mr. Ellis as sufficiently energetic, yet even to this day I do not believe that a majority of our diplomatic agents would have acted differently. I am firmly convinced that a bold tone would have been the proper one, and that the assumption of responsibility would have met with the approval of the people of the United States; but the chief blame must lie at the door of the government, not at the minister's. That Mr. Ellis did not succeed better, in his efforts to procure the liberty of his countrymen, must be ascribed, in the first place, to the circumstance that it has almost become a settled policy with our foreign plenipotentiaries—a policy he did not



feel disposed to deviate from—to avoid taking a decided and serious responsibility, in cases of sudden emergency, fearful that the interests of the party which has sent them may be injured, or its plans for future advancement frustrated by so doing; and herein lies one of the most serious deficiencies of our system of government. The foreign agents of the United States have nominally the same powers that are granted to those of England or France; yet while the latter can act promptly, and with the full confidence that they will be justified and supported at home in whatever stand they may take, the hands of the former are too often tied by the fear that their course may possibly run counter to the interests of that party or clique whose servants they deem themselves, and hence, in matters of really trivial importance, they are driven to write home for advice how to act. In the second place, the instructions at first sent to Mr. Ellis were such as allowed him no other alternative than a “war of words” with the Mexican diplomatists—a game at which the latter leave the Anglo-Saxon race entirely in the distance. They resemble Goldsmith’s country schoolmaster,

“For e’en though vanquished, he could argue still,”

and so can they. If my reader would allow me one moment’s digression, I would give it as my firm conviction that we have had but two administrations since the days of Washington, that were properly bold and independent as regards their foreign policy—those of the Elder Adams and General Jackson. Politicians can take no umbrage at this remark, as I have mentioned two extremes when the general policy of the country is taken into consideration. One great fault, with too many of the administrations by which we have been governed, has been the resort to protracted arguments in matters where not a word of debate should have been allowed—a policy but too well understood by every government with which we have had dealings, and of which all, as a matter of course, have taken advantage. When the powers at Washington are convinced that they are in the right, upon any question of foreign policy at issue, what necessity for dispute? If it is evident that any little patch of territory, no matter how insignificant, belongs of right to us, why not plant, occupy, and, in firm but dignified language, say that we will *keep* it at any and all hazards? If it can be made to appear that an American citizen, under protection of that flag of which we so much boast, is insulted in a foreign land,



why not demand and *obtain* full satisfaction at once ? In many, too many instances, such has not been the case, and every fresh demonstration of inefficiency or inattention to these matters is but granting a fresh license for some foreign power to repeat its aggressions and its insults. In the case of Mr. Alvarez, our Consul at Santa Fé, who, in 1841, was wantonly attacked and severely wounded in his own house, and directly under the "stars and stripes"—in his case what has been done ? Nothing whatever. I might mention even greater outrages, but this is sufficient.

Had Mr. Ellis been authorized to try the virtue of "blows as he undoubtedly would have been by General Jackson, he would have done so with promptness ; but he seemed anxious in no way to transcend the limited instructions given him, and hence the long-protracted correspondence which took place in relation to the American prisoners.\* Mr. E. might, and I believe should, have taken the responsibility, and made a positive demand, either for the prisoners or his passports, in which case, such was the state of feeling in the United States at the time, I am confident he would have been justified by nine-tenths of the people ; but like too many others, he was a "strict constructionist," and disposed to obey rigidly the very letter of his instructions.

On the other hand, had General Thompson been then our minister, he would have stretched the instructions given him to their utmost—nay, would have shaken off the trammels a weak point in our government appears to have thrown over her agents—and by so doing, let what would come of it, received the warm approval and universal thanks of his countrymen. He might not have effected more than did Mr. Ellis, yet I am constrained to believe that he would—that our immediate liberation would have followed close upon a positive demand.

Such I conceive to be the difference between the two ministers, or rather between the course adopted by Mr. Ellis and that which undoubtedly would have been pursued by his successor ; and although suffering and imprisonment without

\* Had General Jackson been President of the United States at the time, I do not believe that one of the American prisoners would have been in bondage twenty-four hours after the first despatch in relation to them had been received at Mexico from Washington. The Mexican diplomatists know perfectly well with whom they have to deal—there would have been no "putting off the previous question" had General J. been in power.



cause for months may have wrought prejudice in my mind, I cannot but believe that the latter course would have been the better and the proper one. Nor can I even now divest myself of the idea that Santa Anna, to this day, laughs in his sleeve when he remembers upon what flimsy pretexts he retained several Americans in prison, without the shadow of cause, and despite the remonstrances of the representative of the United States.\*

But to return to the actual. When Sully came in from the streets, on the evening of the day which had first introduced me to the irons, we ascertained that he had made partial arrangements with some of our guard to pass four of us out secretly in the course of a night or two, or at the first favourable opportunity. The plan was to be more fully matured the next day.

At dark, the heavy door of our room was locked, not to be opened again until morning, and in the mean time a regular guard was placed before it on the outside. The closing of the door was but the signal for all the prisoners to divest themselves of their chains. Such as could slip the irons over their ankles and feet were at once free, while others produced files from their hiding-places, and the work of cutting down rivets was commenced, with an assiduity and zeal, which soon resulted in the Texans ridding themselves of all encumbrances upon their comfort and free locomotion. In certainly less than half an hour the ankles of nearly every prisoner were loosened from the shackles, and it was only from indolence that all did not free themselves. The chains were then carefully placed in positions where they could

\* The fact of my having a passport, although denied, was so abundantly proved, that the Mexican government hardly urged it as an excuse by which to detain me ; but the Chihuahua letter, thoughtlessly written by an American gentleman since dead, and in which it was erroneously stated that I was sent forward as an *avant courier*, was used as a pretext to the very last. By a distortion of the sense of that letter, peculiarly Mexican, I was implicated with the Santa Fé Expedition, and finding this a sufficient plea to continue me in prison, it was never lost sight of. I have little doubt, if the truth could be known, that the papers of which I was robbed by Armijo, passport and all, were quietly resting in the bureau of the Mexican Minister of Foreign Relations during the whole time of the negotiations in relation to the release of the American prisoners. The story that Armijo destroyed the passport in my presence was certainly erroneous, and as he sent all the important papers found upon the Texans to the capital, I have little doubt that mine found their way there in the same package.



easily be put on again, should the ill-natured old commandante by any chance take it into his head to make us a night visit, and this little precaution over, the varied entertainments which usually beguiled the long evenings commenced.

There were some fifty of us in the room in which I was confined, and in one quarter of it would be seen a party engaged at whist, all-fours, uchre, or some other game a knowledge of which they had brought with them from Texas. In another part some prisoner would open the game of monte, an insight into which he had picked up from the Mexicans since his confinement, and around him would be gathered a small knot of betters staking small sums upon the turn of the cards, for all appeared to have more or less money. By the same candle, probably, some two or three of the Texans were reading such books as the foreigners had sent us. In still another quarter a small party would be seen, half reclining upon their blankets, while one of their number recited some story of other days and lands; and should the story chance to be humorous in its nature, the joyous and hearty laugh which followed its termination showed plainly enough that the listeners were thinking of anything but chains and imprisonment.

Songs, too, enlivened the scene, and served to beguile the hours, while several musicians in the party had found means to procure instruments upon which some of them played exceedingly well. But of all the modes employed to while away the evenings, the most common, perhaps, was reading, and conspicuous among this class was my yoke-fellow in chains, the veteran Major Bennett, who might be seen busily poring over a Bible which had been given him by Mr. Elliott, the chaplain of the United States Exploring Expedition, when in Santiago on his way from the Pacific to Washington.

Thus with books and songs, cards and stories, the hours slipped away pleasantly enough to all, and the reader may feel not a little astonishment when I say that the nightly soirées in the old Convent of Santiago were as productive of mirth as are many of those held within the gay saloons of any land. There is something in the Anglo-Saxon character which buoys and sustains the spirit under adversity, a quality which appears to be inherent; and it was continually a matter of surprise to our guard, from San Miguel even to the



city of Mexico, to see not only the indifference we all manifested under our misfortunes, but the gaiety and good-humour which at all times prevailed among the prisoners. And I doubt whether any of the Texans, when memory now carries them back, ever think, without shuddering, of scenes through which they then passed, but which at the time they thought little of, or cared not for. The anticipation of any impending danger or difficulty is invariably worse than the reality ; and when the dreaded reality arrives, and the full measure of our fear breaks upon us, the imagination so busies itself in fancying still greater peril and suffering in perspective that the present is lightened of half its burden. The much-dreaded future is an *ignis fatuus*, leading the mind to anticipate troubles and annoyances which, when encountered, are either not noticed, or only surprise us by their comparatively trifling importance.

When the morning of the 20th of April came, and the Mexican who had charge of the prisoners while at their work entered our apartment, I again expected that I should be ordered into the streets, and compelled to go through the form of labour ; but I was once more fortunate enough to escape. The reason for thus *slighting* me may have been the circumstance that Major Bennett, my companion at the other end of the chain, was exempted from all outdoor work—partly on account of his age and rank as an officer, but principally because he was engaged a portion of his time in the *cocina*, attending to the cooking of our food.

In the course of the day several parties of foreigners visited Santiago. I told them all that I should attempt an escape, and that very night if a favourable opportunity offered. They advised me, by all means, to defer any attempt until after General Thompson was received as the accredited minister of the United States, and I partially consented to this course ; yet had a door been left open, or the least chance of a successful escape offered, I should most certainly have bidden farewell to imprisonment, chains, and Santiago together.\*

\* A Yankee friend of mine resident in Mexico—one of the old Bunker Hill stock—told me, while in San Lazaro, that he hoped I would “tough it out awhile”—I use his own words—in the expectation that our government might be driven into a “small skirmish”—his own words again—with Mexico. I know that one reason why many Americans were anxious that I should not escape through my own means was their desire for a war, and that they thought my



The recollection of the many favourable opportunities to escape while in San Lazaro haunted and annoyed me excessively ; and nothing short of a positive assurance of an honourable liberation within a week could have kept me twenty-four hours in Santiago, had there been a possibility of liberating myself.

At a late hour on the evening of the 20th two or three Americans called upon me a second time, and earnestly requested me to remain quiet another day—to hazard no attempt at an escape until I should hear further from them. As the principal plan, adopted by myself and companions to effect our liberation, was still far from being matured, I consented to abide by the advice of the Americans, and with no little reluctance passed another night in Santiago.

Early the next morning there appeared to be unusual bustle and preparation among the prisoners—an excitement which I did not at first understand. On inquiry, I learned that it was the anniversary of the celebrated battle of San Jacinto—the great victory gained over Santa Anna—and that the Texans were determined upon celebrating it as brilliantly as possible. Some of the Americans then in Mexico, among them Mr. Coolidge, had sent the prisoners some half dozen turkeys, and other luxuries in the way of eating, besides a generous supply of wines and liquors of the choicest qualities. The Texans had also provided themselves, while in the streets the day before, with such little delicacies as they could purchase, determined upon having a grand dinner on the “glorious 21st,” if nothing else.

On ordinary occasions the prisoners were taken from Santiago at about eight o'clock in the morning, conducted some half or three quarters of a mile from the convent to a ditch, and then compelled to go through the forms of pumping and digging. By as close a mathematical calculation as could be made, without instruments or figures, it was thought the water ran into the ditch they were clearing just as fast as they pumped it out—perhaps a trifle faster; but the economy of effecting much with little labour is but ill understood in Mexico, and the fact that the Texans made no progress in the job upon which they were engaged created but little dis-

further detention would be just cause for one. The result of a war, they were confident, would place them upon an equality with the English and French residents—a position they said they were far from enjoying.



ference with the Mexican overseers. At twelve o'clock, or near that hour, the prisoners were conducted back to the convent for their dinners, all in chains, and after occupying some hour and a half or two hours with this meal, they were again conducted to the ditch. Not one of them ever hurt or tired himself with work, but on the contrary it was said that they amused themselves by experimenting on the smallest possible amount of labour a man could perform when he set his wits to work and tried his best ! I recollect a remark made by a facetious prisoner one evening—I think it was Jimmy Tweed—to the effect that he had *exerted* himself all day to ascertain how little he could do ; and the result, in round numbers, was, that he had thrown one shovelful of mud from the ditch, but in so doing he had contrived to *tumble three back!*

The great object with the Texans, on the morning of the 21st of April, was to obtain the consent of the old commandante to their remaining in-doors during the afternoon—they were anxious enough to be taken out in the morning, as it would give them an opportunity to increase their supply of liquor and other materials for the feast. A committee, composed of such as could speak Spanish, was accordingly appointed, whose business it was to wait upon the Mexican officers and inform them that the 21st of April was the patron saint's day of Texas, and also, in language most respectful and courteous, to ask permission to celebrate it in the afternoon with all becoming ceremony and rejoicing. In profound ignorance of the day, and the glorious battle the Texans wished to celebrate, the Mexican officers kindly gave their consent to every request made. By such stratagem the great object of the prisoners was accomplished, and they now set themselves about making every arrangement for the approaching festivities.\*

Such of the prisoners as had any skill in drawing or painting feigned illness, and were not taken out in the morning with their comrades. They had obtained, by some means a

\* It could not have been that the Mexicans were aware of the events which had transpired on the 21st of April. The younger officers of our guard were liberal and accommodating to a fault; yet they would not have dared grant the Texans permission to celebrate a victory which had lost their country one of its most valuable provinces, and this under the very nose of Santa Anna himself, who had been taken prisoner in that battle,



supply of red and white paint, and the result of their morning's work was the decoration of the walls of our room with Texan flags, and sea and land fights—the Texans of course triumphant, the Mexicans discomfited, and the “lone star” in the ascendant. An appropriate ode—full of patriotism, liberty, San Jacinto, love of country, detestation of tyrants, &c.—was written by some poet among the prisoners, and one of the Texan officers, known to be endowed with vocal powers, was appointed to sing it. A master of ceremonies, an orator of the day, toast-master—in fact all the requisite officers were appointed, and before the men came in from their morning's work, every necessary preparation had been made for a regular celebration.

The hour at which the dinner was to be served was three o'clock; but before that time a number of foreigners had arrived at Santiago for the purpose of taking part in the celebration. One of them, who at this time was residing in the city of Mexico, was himself a member of the small but gallant band that achieved the great victory of San Jacinto, and related several interesting anecdotes of that desperate struggle—a struggle which resulted in the complete overthrow of the Mexican power in Texas. The dinner itself was excellent—I might almost say sumptuous. The “bill of fare” did not display that varied list of French inventions to be found at the noted St. Charles Hotel, in New Orleans, or the Astor House, in New-York; but we had roast beef, turkey, and good appetites, and the whole affair went off with the greatest éclat.

After the “cloth was removed”—a performance which it took but about two minutes to execute, as there was nothing to do save to stow the bowls, plates, and spoons away in the corners—after this was done, the celebration of the great anniversary began in real earnest. The regular toasts were appropriate, the volunteers spirited, and the ode a very creditable piece, and given with much effect. An oration by Major Bonnell, one of the prisoners, followed, Dr. Brenham and several other gentlemen also making some very pertinent remarks. As the hours wore along, and the liquor circulated more freely, the hilarity and general good feeling increased. Some of the foreigners present placed the chains of the prisoners around their own ankles, and several fancy jigs and hornpipes were executed with jingling and clanking accompaniments. “Hail Columbia” and the “Star-spangled



**Banner,"** in addition to the Texan patriotic songs were duly honoured by numerous voices, while the memory of Washington was drunk standing and uncovered. Even the younger Mexican officers took part in a celebration which to them must have been strange, drinking several toasts which were highly complimentary to the Texans.

It was not until dark that the joyous festivities ceased, and even after the prisoners were locked in their room for the night, wild catches of song and uproarious merriment helped still farther to enliven the scene. While Santa Anna, at his palace in one part of the city, was doubtless brooding over his misfortunes on the fatal field of San Jacinto a crowd of jovial Texan prisoners were celebrating that very victory in another part, in chains.



## CHAPTER XXXIV.

**Intelligence of immediate Release.—Arrival of Mr. Ellis with an Order for our Release.—Once more free from Chains.—Leave Santiago and imprisonment.—Congratulations of the young Mexican Officers.—Another night Ride through Mexico.—Encounter with a religious Procession.—Watchwords of Mexico.—Early Morn in Mexico.—Appearance of the Streets.—Picture of morning Life in Mexico.—A Shearring and Shaving Operation.—Beggars in front of a Church.—Description of the wretched Throng.—A sumptuous Breakfast.—Visit to the British Minister, Mr. Pakenham.—Visit to old Quarters at San Lazaro.—Bribing a Sentinel.—Meeting with the Texans and Lepers.—Mexican Lady.—Her musical Attainments.—Anecdote of her Spirit and Patriotism.**

In the very midst of the celebration, and while the rejoicing was at its height, Mr. Coolidge called upon me with the intelligence that I was to be liberated immediately—in fact, that the order for my release was already given, and only awaited certain signatures to be carried into effect. This gentleman, in company with a number of Americans, had been at the palace of Santa Anna when Mr. Ellis took his leave and General Thompson presented his credentials and was duly received as the Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States. At this audience, as Mr. Coolidge informed me, Santa Anna formally assured Mr. Ellis that he should give up to him young Howard, Sully, and myself, with four of the prisoners at Puebla who had claimed American protection. With a cunning characteristic of the Provisional President, he now saw that he had an opportunity to dispose of us without compromising his honour and dignity, and, placing our liberation in the light of a personal favour to Mr. Ellis, had consented to give us up to that gentleman. Santa Anna is never caught without some loop-hole through which to crawl when closely cornered.

The time had been when news that I was to be immediately released, coming in shape so authentic, would have



filled me with sensations the most pleasing—now I received it with an indifference which even to myself appeared unaccountable. It may be that the numerous false hopes that had been held out to me partly induced this unconcern, for I should most certainly have received a present of a box of cigars with more pleasure; but the principal reason was, that I felt perfectly confident of making my escape within a few hours, or days at farthest. I say that I felt confident—I was *certain* of being free from chains and imprisonment immediately, and through my own individual exertions, and this certainly begat indifference to any other means. Another thing, which in some measure served to alloy the cup of happiness, was the circumstance that we understood our liberation was granted, not as a right, but as a personal favour. We all had that pride of country which induced us to hope that our government would peremptorily and unconditionally demand our release, and were every way prepared to abide the issue, be it what it might. We knew the *people* of our native land, and knowing them, felt confident that our wrongs would, if persisted in, sooner or later be redressed.

The door of our prison, on the night of the celebration, was locked a little after the usual hour, yet the rejoicing still continued. As the hours sped along, the prisoners, one by one, rolled themselves in their blankets upon the stone floor, and soon fell asleep. Suffering from a cold and slight headache at the time, I had followed their example and was already in a half doze, when a sound was heard at the door as of a key slowly turning in the lock. This was between nine and ten o'clock, and the unusual circumstance of a visit at that hour not only awoke such of the prisoners as were asleep, but induced all to begin fastening the chains about their ankles and taking the necessary precautions in case the old commandante had chosen that strange hour to look in upon us. I had not taken off my irons on lying down—why I know not—so that my “toilet was made” for the reception of any company that might call at our quarters.

The door at length slowly opened, and the old commandante, accompanied by Mr. Ellis, Mr. Mayer, and the two or three of the Mexican officers on duty at the convent, entered our prison. On seeing Mr. Mayer at an hour so unusual, I at once felt assured that I was to be released. He introduced me to Mr. Ellis, and afterward made him acquainted with



Colonel Cooke and several of the Texan officers ; and as he looked around him, as he heard the clanking of chains, and beheld such numbers of his countrymen in plight so mortifying and degrading, the kind-hearted minister was deeply affected.

He had brought the order for the release of Howard, Sully, and myself, and the old commandante had ordered a blacksmith to accompany him for the purpose of releasing us from the irons. Sully soon extricated himself without assistance, but with young Howard the case was different. His chain was almost the only one so securely fastened that it could not be got off without difficulty, and the old blacksmith was compelled to hammer away upon his anvil several minutes before the task was accomplished. I well knew that a single shake of my foot would release my ankle from the annoying load of iron ; but anxious to astonish the Mexicans a little, even at this time, I allowed the blacksmith to place his anvil in a position near me. On his pointing to my ankle, and making signs that he was ready to perform the kind office of relieving me, I gave my foot a light shake, which sent the chain clanking across the floor. The rivet which had but partially confined it, fell near me. I quietly picked it up and put in my pocket, determined to have some memento of Santiago and imprisonment more lasting than mere recollection, should that ever fail me. If the old commandante of the convent, in taking account of stock, should happen to miss one of his rivets, he can charge the same to me.

In a few minutes, after promising to call upon our Texan friends on the following day, we left the lock-up room of Santiago, the prisoners giving three hearty cheers as we crossed the threshold. At the outer door the young Mexican officers crowded around us, cordially congratulating us upon our release, and expressing the warmest wishes that our still imprisoned comrades might soon be permitted to accompany us. From their actions, it appeared that our liberation gave them emotions even pleasurable as our own.

Mr. Ellis had procured a coach to convey us to the city, which we now entered in company with himself and Mr. Mayer. Several buildings were passed which I recollected having seen, a few nights before, while on the gloomy midnight trip from San Lazaro to Santiago. On entering one of the main streets of Mexico we met a long religious procession, preceded by bells and lights, and probably on its way to



perform some funeral service. Our postillion reined up his mules, and uncovering our heads, we remained still until the last stragglers had passed. A drive of some half a mile now brought us to the apartments of Mr. Ellis, at the United States Legation, in a street immediately in the rear of the cathedral and within a stone's throw of the great palace whence came all the decrees and vaunting proclamations sent forth to the Mexican people, and which has been the scene of revolutions innumerable. At the rooms of Mr. Ellis we found several of our countrymen collected, all congratulating us upon our happy release. Our next movement was to the Gran Sociedad, a large establishment where Mr. Mayer had provided rooms for our accommodation. I had intended to take lodgings at the *Casa de Diligencias*, or Stage Hotel, but my kind friends would not listen to any such arrangement.

Once in comfortable quarters at the Gran Sociedad, free again and at a liberty to do as it might please me, I passed some two or three hours in reading a file of American newspapers which had just been received. At a late hour I retired to rest, but not to sleep. From the 15th of September to the 21st of April, more than seven months, I had been a prisoner—I had performed a toilsome and painful march exceeding two thousand miles—I had seen my comrades inhumanly butchered around me, had seen them die from exposure, from hardship, and from sickness—I had passed through an endless variety of scenes the most exciting; yet all this time I had slept well, except when illness or severe inclemency of weather prevented it. Now I had liberty and every comfort at my command, but sleep would not visit my eyelids. The very quiet around me, instead of being a provocative of slumber, seemed to keep me awake. I missed the hard stone or earthen floors, the knowledge that comrades were strewn close around me, the clanking of chains—the very groans of the unfortunate *lazarinos* were wanting. I missed, too, the eternal cries of our guard—the “*centinela alerta!*” the “*quien vive?*” and “*que gente?*” \* which had

\* These are the common watchwords of sentinels on duty in Mexico. If any one approaches, the sentinel shouts aloud “*quien vive?*”—who lives, or, rather, who comes? The answer expected is “*Republica*”—the Republic. The guard next cries “*que gente?*”—what people?—the party addressed, if a friend, being expected to answer “*paisano*”—a countryman. Not a little startled is the stranger, on



rung in our ears until the grating sounds had fairly become so many lullabies. Thoughts of home, of liberty of once more visiting the friends and scenes of other days, came crowding and jostling each other through my mind in such rapid succession that my head was in a very whirl of excitement. Tired nature at length achieved the mastery, however, and towards morning I fell asleep.

At an early hour, and before the sun was yet up, I was awakened from my dreamy slumbers by a distressing and most doleful cry in the street, apparently under the window of the second story in which I lodged. To me the sounds resembled those of some unfortunate human being, suffering pain the most acute—so piteous were the cries, that I could not but think some poor fellow had been knocked down and run over by a coach, or met with some serious hurt, and with broken limbs was groaning aloud for assistance. Arising at once, I opened a glass door and stepped out upon the small balcony which is to be seen under the windows of the better houses in Mexico. No creature whose appearance indicated pain or distress could I discover, as I ran my eye up and down the street and along the side-walks on either side. Whence could the accents of suffering proceed? In the street, immediately under the balcony, stood a swarthy, badly-dressed, half Indian half Mexican charcoal vender, his entire

arriving in Mexico, as he hears these watchwords ringing around him—I know that on one occasion, to use a nautical phrase, I “was thrown all aback” by the cry. I was passing the palace at a late hour of the night, not a living being within sight or hearing, and no sound breaking the stillness save that dull and heavy echo which follows every footfall upon a pavement. I had approached within six or eight yards of a sentry box, standing directly in front of the palace, when a sentinel, who was probably asleep, suddenly awoke, and bringing his musket to a present, in a hurried manner gave the well-known “*quien vive?*” So sudden were his movements that I was even more astonished than himself. I flourished a cane which I held in my hand around my head, as if to ward off his musket, should he level it, and not thinking of the proper answer immediately, ejaculated “An Englishman!” Whether he understood me or not I am unable to say—I passed on without farther molestation or hindrance. It may appear singular that I called myself “an Englishman; to account for it I would state that on that very evening I had been told by an American, while conversing as to the greater respect entertained in Mexico for the English than for our own countrymen, that he invariably “hailed from England” whenever asked as to his origin. With this true but mortifying remark fresh in my memory, and in my haste to say something, I gave the sentinel that answer



stock in trade strapped to his back in a large, square basket. Not the most remote suspicion had I that he was the author of the piteous cries, which had first startled me from repose, until the fellow raised his dark but subdued eyes to the balcony where I was standing, and drawled out a word which, with the key attached to his back, I now understood to be “*carbon*”—charcoal. Had it not been that I could plainly see the charcoal, I certainly never should have suspected the meaning of the strange sounds he uttered or his calling. In giving articulation to the word “*carbon*” alone, the crier had run through the entire scale, and really used notes enough to form an Italian bravura of no inconsiderable complication. Those who have visited Mexico must have been struck, at first, with the strange and most discordant cries which assailed their ears immediately after daylight.

The morning was bright, beautiful, and balmy—the ushering in of one of those delightful days of spring-time known only in the dry, pure climate of the Mexican *tierras templadas*—and I lingered upon the balcony to survey the scene below and around me. Crowds of women, of every class and nearly every shade were seen either going to or returning from mass at the different churches, their rebosos or mantillas coquettishly covering their heads and necks, their gait inimitably graceful, while their brilliant yet languishing black eyes were wandering from object to object with those indolent but expressive and voluptuous glances which go strait to the heart—Castilian, but indescribable. Water carriers, with their large jars strapped to their heads, were hurrying to serve their morning customers. Fellows stooping and staggering under the weight of huge coops filled with chickens, strapped to their backs after the fashion of their charcoal baskets, were visiting the houses of their daily patrons—threading and jostling their way through the crowds of females who at this early hour thronged the principal thoroughfares, and crying aloud their calling as they passed. Fair doncellas, whose complexion bespoke their pure Spanish blood, were tripping along, followed closely by ancient and vinegar-faced duennas, whose calling it was to prevent the charge intrusted to them by prudent mothers from falling in love or running away. Fruitmen and women, with immense baskets of luscious oranges, melons, sweet limes, bananas, and zapotes resting upon their heads, were hastening towards their stands at the market-places. Mexican girls, apparently half dressed,



were watering the plants and flowers with which the opposite and adjoining balconies were adorned, while inside a window, seated cross-legged upon the floor and in dishabille exceeding loose and slight to say the least of it was a young lady quietly sipping her chocolate, ever and anon turning her dark eyes with a dreamy expression towards the spot where I was standing, my presence not seeming in the least to disconcert her. Priests, with their long, shovel hats, monks, gentlemen, *léperos*, friars, mendicants, sisters of different charitable and religious orders, were mingled with the heterogeneous currents of people below me—and as if to diversify a scene already strikingly singular in the eyes of a foreigner, a gang of ragged *forsados*\* from some of the prisons, strongly chained and securely guarded, were sweeping or mending a street-crossing close at hand. Far off in a distance, a string of the *voluntarios* of whom I have often made mention—convicts tied together, and on their way to some *presidio* to be manufactured into soldiers—were seen escorted onward by a detachment of dragoons: to enliven and still farther to vary the scene, a troop of calvary, preceded by a dashing and showy officer and such music as a badly-blown trumpet produces, were riding past. Such were the strangely-assorted figures and groups which composed the picture spread before me the first morning after my liberation, and I continued to gaze until Mr. Mayer called at my door with inquiries as to whether I had passed as comfortable, as agreeable, and as quiet a night as I did while in San Lazaro, or more recently in Santiago.

That my wardrobe, after a seven months' imprisonment and a journey of three or four months without a trunk or portmanteau, was scanty enough, may be readily imagined; but my friend at once kindly offered me the free use of his, and I soon found myself arrayed in habiliments more befitting my new position. The purchase of a hat, at a shop in the Portales close by, still farther improved my outward man, and the patronage I bestowed upon a shoemaker in the neighbourhood, to the extent of a pair of boots, advanced the work of thorough change and renovation I had commenced. One thing was still wanting—my face required an introduction to a barber. While a prisoner, I had endeavoured to

\* Literally galley-slaves, but by a free translation made to denote men forced to work against their will. •



make myself as little like myself as possible, firmly convinced that I should recover my liberty in no other way than by escaping: in order, therefore, to disguise myself completely, I had assiduously cultivated whiskers, mustaches, and hair enough for a foreign prince, or even the Great Mogul himself. Now I had no farther use for these appendages, and to be relieved of them as speedily as possible I inquired the way to a French hair-dresser's in the Plateros, or street in which the gold and silver smiths, fancy and jewelry dealers, milliners and barbers pursue their different callings. No sooner had I passed through the hands of a lively and chattering but polite little Frenchman, than such was the change that I hardly knew myself. True, my acquaintance with my own face, for the previous eleven months, had been extremely limited, looking-glasses not being in common use among Texan campaigners or prisoners; but I had had an occasional opportunity of obtaining a glimpse of myself, and now that I had undergone the shearing and shaving operation, the alteration wrought in my personal appearance was not only astonishing, but, I am inclined to believe, altogether in my favour.

While retracing my steps towards the Gran Sociedad, I passed a large church, in front of which a crowd of wretched beggars had already taken their stand. Such an assortment of mendicants I had never before seen collected—such squalid misery as the mass presented—and although dread-ing contact with the unclean and hideous *mendigos*, I could not resist pausing for a few moments to examine the different characters. There were the lame, the halt, and the blind—sickly and distorted childhood, decrepit, and palsied old age. A deformed living skeleton, with a face of bluish, ashy paleness, and borne in the arms of a strong man who doubtless divided such small pittance of copper as the ghastly object received, was stretching forth its shrivelled and skinny arms to every passer. Armless and legless objects, so dressed that their crippled situation must at once strike every beholder, were beseeching alms in accents most piteous. Mothers were holding deformed, rickety, pale, and sightless children up to the public gaze, imploring the prayers and blessings of every saint in the long calendar upon such as would give to their unfortunate offspring a single claco. Wretched cripples, their arms and legs contracted and twisted out of all shape, were peering, with bloodshot eyes and



haggard faces, at the current of pedestrians as they passed, a gleam of satisfaction almost demoniacal lighting up their countenances as some more charitable person would throw a copper into their hands. No disguise, no concealment of their deformities, was attempted—on the contrary, it seemed as though a full exposure of their crippled limbs and repulsive distortions was the aim of all—as though they were expressly “got up” to set off their natural hideousness in the strongest possible light. Such is but a hurried picture of a portion of the miserable mendicants congregated in the vicinity of the church, and it was not without a shudder that I turned into a short street leading to my quarters. In former times the lepers of the city were allowed the privilege of begging, and it was even considered fortunate when a poor family numbered a *lazarino* in its fold. The wretch thus afflicted was paraded daily at some conspicuous stand, directly in the way of the passers, and the alms he or she was sure to receive would feed, clothe, and support a large family in idleness. Finding the number of *lazarinos* on the increase, or rather shrewdly suspecting that many of the wretches were but counterfeits, made up by the use of blisters and other applications, the city government ordered every one known to be afflicted with the disease to San Lazaro, there to be provided for; but this course was not resorted to until both foreigners and the most respectable Mexicans had openly complained of the increase of the repulsive objects to be met at every turn, and the disgrace they brought upon the city. This was the story I heard in relation to the banishment of the lepers to San Lazaro—if it be true, their places have since been filled by wretches wanting but little to make them equally loathsome in appearance, and equally objects of pity.

Before I reached the Gran Sociedad, I met several small parties of soldiers. A moment's reflection told me that I was free, and no longer subject to their watchful control; yet I could not feel altogether at ease in close proximity with these fellows. I was in momentary expectation, although there was not the least cause for it, that some one of them would lay his hand upon my shoulders, and ask me how it happened that I was “out without a guard;” and several days elapsed, before I could divest myself of the idea that I was still in some way a prisoner.



before I could feel and believe that I was indeed at liberty.

An excellent breakfast was served up immediately after my return to the Gran Sociedad, Mr. Ellis and several other gentleman being already in attendance to partake of it. Most ample justice did I and the two companions of my recent imprisonment to the rich and dainty viands, for it was almost a year since we had seen a meal so inviting spread before us, and hardly half a dozen times within that year had we seen all those trifling necessities known in civilized countries as knives, forks, spoons, chairs, a table, and other useful and comfortable *et cæteras*, considered by the majority of my readers, perhaps, indispensable in every well-regulated household. Our coffee, too, was of rich quality and flavour, while excellent claret was cooled by ice brought from the adjoining snow cap mountains. The remembrance of these luxuries, trifling as they might have appeared had I never been deprived of them, still clings to me. Those and those only, who have for months spent their time upon the prairies, and amid scenes kindred to those through which we had passed, are able to appreciate the full blessings of civilization and the thousand and one comforts which before they heeded not.

When breakfast was over, I called upon Mr. Pakenham, the English minister, in company with Mr. Mayer. Two or three of my fellow-prisoners had claimed British protection, and I wished to relate to the minister of their government, in person, some of the circumstances connected with their arrest and imprisonment, which would show the justice of their claims in the strongest possible light. I found Mr. Pakenham a plain and unostentatious but agreeable and gentlemanly man, disposed to aid his countrymen in every way. A few days after this visit, through his intercession, my friends were released.

A small party of us, procuring one of the heavy coaches of the city, next visited Santiago—the miserable quarters from which we had been removed the night before. So great had been the change wrought in my appearance by Mr. Mayer's wardrobe, aided by the French barber in the Plateros, that many of my former fellow-prisoners with difficulty recognised me—a circumstance I mention as showing how thoroughly I could have disguised myself had I attempted



the escape which I contemplated. After promising the unfortunate fellows another visit, we again turned our backs upon Santiago, but before entering the coach a couple of Mexican girls came running towards us to offer their congratulations upon our release. These kind-hearted creatures were of the lower class, fruit girls, who had formed strong attachments for two of the Texan prisoners, and who never left the vicinity of Santiago during the day. Wherever the prisoners were taken they were to be seen, carrying their blankets, washing and mending their clothes, and performing every act of kindness within their power. They now not only appeared much rejoiced at our liberation, but pressed us with questions as to the probability of the other prisoners being shortly released. After flattering them with hopes we were but too fearful would prove false, we put some silver into their hands, and then returned to the city to dine.

In the afternoon, after I had purchased several little articles of clothing of which I knew my companions in San Lazaro to be sadly in need, and adding a few bundles of purs with which they might beguile the dreary hours of their imprisonment, a small party of us rode out to that establishment. The sergeant of the guard at first positively denied us admission, saying that express orders to that effect had been received; but a dollar stealthily slipped into his hand, not only opened his heart, but the hospital doors at once. The steward of the establishment next made some objections to our entrance into the interior—but one of my companions, who spoke his language fluently, soon overcame his scruples, and we were permitted to pass without farther hindrance.

As I entered the long and gloomy hall in which I had passed some two months, the unfortunate lepers came hobbling from their cots, crowded around me, and at the same time expressed not a little satisfaction at seeing me in possession of liberty. My former Texan companions, too, were overjoyed to see me once more; for the strange and unreasonable hour chosen for my removal, the strong guard that accompanied me from San Lazaro, combined with the appearance of the litter and the mystery in which the whole affair was shrouded, had raised suspicions in their minds that I had at least been thrown into one of the lowest of the Mexican prisons, if no worse fate had befallen me. I believe



that they were entirely ignorant of all the circumstances until I called upon them in person. After distributing our little presents, and promising to make them another visit, we left the hospital, the sergeant hurrying our departure. Whether the fellow thought we had got our dollar's worth, or whether he wished a farther bribe, is known only to himself.

Our next call was at the house of a Mexican lady—the same who had visited me while in San Lazaro, and who had sent me the present of fish I have mentioned in a former chapter. She informed me that she had heard something of my good fortune with pleasure, and was now doubly gratified that I had called upon her to confirm the report of my release. At home, we found the senora a lively creature, chatty and of most agreeable manners, with a dashing, spirited way of expressing herself, peculiarly pointed. An anecdote is told of her which goes far to show her character. During one of the more recent revolutions which have distracted Mexico, two or three gentlemen who had espoused the cause she favoured sought refuge during a turn of affairs against them, in her house, anxious to escape the dangers to be encountered in the streets. So far as mere words went, they were most zealous and unflinching supporters and advocates of certain principles; but when blows came and balls whistled, they were not to be seen at the post of peril. Their party had met with various reverses, and, as they thought, every thing was going directly against them, when suddenly the roar of cannon and the rattling of musketry without convinced them that their fighting friends were once more struggling manfully for the ascendancy. “Those are our cannon! those are our cannon!” shouted one of the inflated patriots from his hiding-place, at the same time clapping his hands and skipping for joy. “Now we are gaining ground again!”

“*We!*” retorted the spirited senora, with ineffable scorn. “fine patriots, *you*, to be sneaking and skulking here, among a parcel of women, when your friends are bravely exposing themselves in the streets for the principles you are so loud-mouthed in advocating, but which you have not the courage to stand up and protect. Would that *I* were a man! You would see me at those cannon whose music so delights your ears—not secreted among helpless women, and spending my time and breath in idle words. If



those are your cannon, why don't you go and help work them, like true patriots and brave men?"

Such was the character given us of the senora, and I certainly passed a very agreeable hour at her house. Not a little was she celebrated in Mexico as a singer, and on this occasion she favoured us with a number of Spanish ballads in style most exquisite, accompanying her rich and powerful voice on the piano. The visit over, I returned once more to the Gran Sociedad, amid a shower of rain which flooded the streets, and at an early hour retired to try what success I could have in sleeping the second night after my liberation.



## CHAPTER XXXV.

**An early Morning Walk.—The Plaza Mayor.—The Cathedral and Stone of the Calender.—Interior of the Cathedral.—Shops of the Portales.—The Streets of Mexico.—Another Visit to Santiago.—Encounter with Major Howard.—Particulars of the daring Escape of Captain Hudson and Major Howard.—The Italian Opera.—Castellan.—Another Encounter with Major Howard.—Temerity of Captain Hudson.—Mexican Modes of Salutation.—Anecdote of a Meeting with a fair Mexican.—An excellent Trait in Mexican Character.—Their Benevolence towards the Sick.—Domestic Relations of the Padres.**

With body and mind strengthened and refreshed I arose the next morning, for although some of the objects and scenes I had beheld during the day passed in review before the eye of the slumbering mind, my sleep had been sound and unbroken. Hastily dressing, as I had resolved upon attending early mass, I descended to the street and took the direction towards one of the principal churches.

The beggars of Mexico must be an industrious class, and very early risers, for before even the sun had made his appearance I found them up and stirring—many of them already at their stands in front of the religious establishments to be met at almost every turn, and with outstretched arms reciting their well-conned prayers for charity. Determined upon going to the celebrated cathedral at once, as the headquarters where I should probably see more than at any other place devoted to the showy religion of the inhabitants, I passed two or three churches of most imposing appearance with merely an examination of their exteriors. A short walk brought me to the Plaza Mayor, or principal square, on the eastern side of which, and surmounted by two ornamented towers rises the noble Cathedral of Mexico. I paused for a few moments, to examine the great Stone of the Calender, resting against the south-western corner of the



cathedral. It is of immense size, weighing more than twenty tons, the entire face of it sculptured with strange, but well-executed hieroglyphics. By means of the carved figures upon this stone—some twelve of which, it is pretended, represent the signs of the zodiac—the ancient inhabitants are said to have divided time—the years into months, weeks and days, and the latter into hours—and even to this day the traveller is told, and with much appearance of sincerity, the ignorant Indians can tell the hour of the day, to a minute by examining this singular calender. They might as well say that the natives can tell the time by consulting the face of a common burr millstone, or a pair of hay-scales.

Satisfied that I could make nothing by the hieroglyphics, which were every way as unintelligible as the figures on a Chinese tea-chest, I turned and entered the cathedral. The walls, paintings, statues, ballustrades, and different ornaments, were rich even to magnificence—the floor dirty, covered with kneeling groups of all classes and conditions at their devotions—while an odour, disagreeable and prison-like, caused by the filthiness characteristic of all Mexican churches, pervaded the spacious and imposing interior, perceptible even above the fumes of burning incense. Dogs were either lying asleep in different parts, or walking about so noiselessly that it almost seemed as though they were fearful of disturbing the deep stillness of the immense apartment—a stillness broken only by the hum of half-muttered prayers and the low pealing of an organ the position of which I could not discover. Anxious to examine the farthest recesses of the cathedral, to note its paintings, statues, gilding, costly pannelling, and exceeding richness of adornment, I doffed my hat and advanced towards the interior. The first step I took drew the eyes of those immediately in front towards me; the second attracted the attention of a still greater number of the kneeling worshippers. I now found that the boots I had purchased the day before were yet unbroken, and sent up a loud creak from the stone floor at every step. I attempted to advance on tiptoe—the creaking seemed to grow louder the more I endeavoured to prevent it. I paused, with the hope that I might advance under cover of the noise made by the arrival of a party of fresh worshippers who were approaching—they were either bare-footed, or else their well-worn shoes



gave forth no sound. One more attempt I made; but it was as unsuccessful as the others—every step appeared to draw additional attention, and even the dogs seemed to eye me rebukingly as a disturber of the solemn stillness which reigned around. It may seem a simple matter but I was compelled to put off an examination of this noble establishment, solely on account of a pair of new and creaking boots; for finding that I could not advance without annoying the assembled congregation, I retraced my steps and left the cathedral as quietly and silently as possible.

By this time the stores and shops in the *Portales*, on the opposite side of the plaza, were open, the gay Mexican sarapes and other gaudy merchandise displayed in front presenting a brilliant and showy appearance. The walls of many of the houses, in this quarter of the city, bear indisputable evidence of the various revolutions which have distracted the country and paralyzed its energies, for the marks of cannon balls are still plainly visible, let the eye range where it will. After getting lost once or twice, and travelling three or four blocks out my way in consequence of what I conceived to be the wrong directions I received from such of the passers as I asked for information, I finally reached the Gran Sociedad in season for breakfast. In Mexico the more important and principal streets have a new name for every square—a single straight and continuous thoroughfare having perhaps a dozen different titles—and hence the difficulty the foreigner at first meets in finding a location.

During the forenoon I made another visit to Santiago, in company with several Americans. Before leaving the convent, one of the prisoners, a young man named Grover, presented me with a copy of a neatly-written paper, published weekly in Santiago, entitled the "*True Blue*." It contained a regular report of the proceedings of the 21st of April—speeches, toasts, songs, and all. Among the contributors were Mr. Grover himself, a young man named Mabry,\*

\* I have been told that Mr. Mabry, after his return to Texas, obtained a midshipman's warrant in the navy of that country, and that he was lost on board the ill-fated war-schooner San Antonio, Captain Seger. It may be remembered by the reader, that a man with nearly the same name—Mayby—lost his life when Lieutenant Hull was killed, being a member of the unfortunate party first massacred by the Cayguas. Since the first volume of this work passed through the hands of the stereotyper, I have learned farther particulars in relation



and others, and in newspaper parlance, the "whole affair was exceedingly well got up." Again promising our friends another visit before leaving the country, we entered our Mexican coach and returned to our quarters in the city.

It was while walking through one of the principal and most densely-thronged streets, and in the middle of the day, that I met my old companion, Major Howard, of whose escape from Puebla I had already heard, but of whose present whereabouts I was ignorant. He was disguised, it is true; for his naturally light and curly hair was coloured to a more than Mexican blackness, and combed and pomatumed down until it lay as straight as a Quaker's; yet there was no mistaking his florid complexion and his walk, and I crossed the street and accosted him at once. He informed me that both himself and his companion in escape, Captain Hudson, although a price had been set upon their heads, were then boarding openly at a Mexican meson, as a place where they would be least likely to be suspected or sought, and that they were both determined to see the "sights" in the city before attempting a return to Texas or the United States.

At the Italian Opera, whither I had gone to see "*N*

to the melancholy deaths of Lieutenant H. and his men. Mr. Phillips, a young man attached to the Santa Fé Expedition, who saw the whole affair, informs me that the party did not retreat an inch, as I have previously stated, but on the contrary simultaneously threw themselves from their horses on discovering the approach of the Indians, formed the animals in a circle, and each man knelt inside to await the charge of their enemies. Suddenly, and as if by magic, the Cayguas were on every side, their heavy buffalo hide shields held before them, and after a short but desperate struggle, the Texans were overpowered by the fearful odds, and slain. The names of the men thus massacred in addition to those of Lieutenant Hull and Mr. Mayby already mentioned, were Sergeant Flenner, Dunn and Woodson. Many errors, but principally of omission, have of course occurred in this narrative. On leaving Austin, I provided myself with a note-book, in which I entered not only every little incident on each day's march, but the course, the distance travelled, as near as it could be kept by dead reckoning, with a description of the country, soil, and general appearance. Of this book I was robbed by Salezar, and hence I have been compelled to depend almost entirely upon memory in making up my travel's history." The reader who will but reflect for a moment, will see the disadvantages under which I have laboured, and, I am confident, will overlook and excuse any discrepancies, omissions, or errors which must necessarily occur in a work written under the circumstances.



*Templario*," on the same evening I again met Major Howard, listening to the rich, full voice of the Castellan with much apparent satisfaction. Between the acts, in the coffee-room attached to the theatre, I once more met him, in conversation with a Mexican officer, and on taking him aside, and remonstrating with him upon the risk he ran in thus exposing himself, he contended that the best way to avoid suspicion was to frequent the most public places, and mix with the Mexicans themselves. He then gave me a short account of the manner in which himself and his companion effected their escape. On account of either real or feigned sickness, they had been quartered in the hospital at Puebla, where, for some weeks, they were allowed to visit the town every night upon parole. So long as this privilege was granted them, they had no opportunity to escape, as they could not break their faith with the officers who had treated them thus generously; but on the night in question, through some whim for which they could not account, they were told that they could not leave the hospital walls without a guard of four men. With this guard they sallied into the streets, determined not to return if a shadow of opportunity to escape offered.

They went at once to a restaurant which they had frequently visited, their watchful guard attending them. But a short time elapsed before they contrived to turn the attention of the soldiers into an adjoining room, and no sooner was this effected than they slipped through a side door or window, and hastily fled to the house of a generous Mexican with whom they had become acquainted. At this place, although a large reward was offered for their apprehension, they remained safely secreted some ten days. Their next movement was towards the city of Mexico, by the regular daily stage. This conveyance they left when within some ten or fifteen miles of the city, and striking across the country, they were enabled to reach a factory village in safety. Here the foreigners, to whom they made known their situation, provided them with passports to enter the city, and taking one of the canals they were soon comfortably housed at one of the mesones of the capital. Such are the brief particulars of their daring escape from Puebla and arrival in safety at the city of Mexico.

If possible, Captain Hudson exposed himself even more than did his comrade. Not content with openly visiting all



the walks, curiosities, public amusements, churches, and other general resorts of the population, he clambered into one of the towers of the cathedral, where he either carved or picked his name in the most conspicuous place he could find; and as if this was not enough, he even added "Of the Texan Santa Fé Pioneers" at the end of it, and this when a heavy reward was hanging over his head.

Fortunately both these young men reached the United States and Texas in safety, although the risks they were compelled to run were almost incredible. They travelled to the seacoast in the stage, entering Puebla in open day and the hospital from which they had escaped being but a few yards from the Casa de Diligencias where they were obliged to stop and sleep one night. They even saw, standing around the hotel on the arrival of the stage, several officers with whom they had become well acquainted during a confinement of nearly two months in the place; but they passed boldly by them, and under the disguises they had procured were not suspected. Such is a short account of the escape of these officers—an escape well conceived and bravely carried through from first to last.

After sitting out the opera, which as a whole was well performed, we returned to our quarters. I now found that during the day I had been robbed of two handkerchiefs and a penknife, besides part of a bundle of purses, but how, when, or where was a mystery. I had exercised, as I thought, all due caution—had kept an eye or a hand on my pockets whenever there seemed to be the least chance for the light-fingered gentry, who infest churches, theatres, and thoroughfares alike in the great city of Mexico, to ply their calling—but with all my watchfulness I had been eased of everything save a lead pencil, a little loose change which was in my vest pocket, and the clothes on my back. On informing my friends of these depredations, they appeared to think me peculiarly fortunate, inasmuch as to save anything was of itself an exceedingly rare occurrence with a stranger. As a "general average," they said that the robbers should at least have taken my hat and what little silver I had! This was certainly consoling; but to guard against the ladrones in future I determined upon carrying nothing with me that the rascals might covet. The Mexican *cortabolsas*, or pick-pockets, have the name of being the most adroit in the world, and from my little experience I should say they had



well earned the reputation. At all events, I do not intend to rob them of their foul fame.

For three or four days after my release—in fact, during the whole of the time I was in the city at liberty—I was continually meeting with Mexicans of my acquaintance—officers who had been attached to our guard at different places. They all appeared much rejoiced on seeing that I had regained my freedom, manifesting their pleasure by warmly embracing me, meet me where they would. This custom of throwing the left arm around each other, while the right hands are clasped as with us, is common, I believe, all over Mexico, alike when two men, or two women, or two of the opposite sexes meet who are well acquainted; and perhaps this cordial mode of reception from the females of the country may be considered as one of the strongest of those ties which certainly bind the Americans and English to the land of Montezuma. The cold and phlegmatic Anglo-Saxon, after a residence of some year or two in Mexico, leaves it with regret; for there are a grace, an ease, a fascination, and a cordiality of greeting among the *senoritas* of that country which cannot be forgotten. The American or Englishman reflects upon the stiffness and restraint imposed upon the actions of his fair countrywomen by cold, conventional rules—he remembers the distant bow, the formal shake of the hand, with which he will be greeted on his return, and contrasts them with his daily salutations from the dark-eyed daughters of the sunny land in which he is sojourning. The result is altogether in favour of the latter.

It is indeed a delightful thing to be ever greeted with the most cordial freedom, when we know that that freedom is entirely removed from forwardness—to have the person encircled by arms which are faultless in form—and a man feels that it is difficult to tear himself away from a people whose manners, in their daily intercourse, are in every respect more full of warmth and kindness than those of his own countrymen, and countrywomen, too; for while even the men are not wanting in natural and easy politeness, the Mexican *senoras* have a frankness of deportment, a kindness and singleness of disposition, which captivate the natives of colder climes, and frequently did I meet with countrymen whose love for their fatherland had become completely estranged by the fascinations of female society in Mexico. The women of that country, when married to any of the Anglo-Saxon



race, have the reputation of making the best and most affectionate wives; and scattered through Mexico may be found innumerable instances where foreigners, induced by no other motives than the superior charms and excellent domestic endowments of the women, have settled permanently and are rearing families.

I have been led to these remarks by a little circumstance which occurred a few mornings after I had regained my liberty. While walking at an early hour through one of the principal streets, wondering whence came the incessant current of passers, and staring at the many strange sights which strike the traveller on first visiting one of the most magnificent cities of the world, I noticed a young and pretty girl approaching, who seemed to gaze at me with marked attention. Dressed somewhat after the fashion of the Poblana girls—a costume I have already described—her neat and gracefully-worn reboso but partially concealed her head, face, and well-turned shoulders, and I might have bestowed more than an ordinary passing look upon the fair gazer, even had she not so intently eyed me. Her face certainly seemed familiar—like that of one I had previously seen: but in a country where there is so great a resemblance between the women—where black hair, dark and lustrous eyes, great regularity of features, and the same fashion of dress are almost universal—it is difficult to recognise a face until one becomes well acquainted. On arriving directly in front of me, the girl paused for a moment, gazing earnestly and intently in my face; and at a loss what to make of conduct so singular, I also stopped, anxious to see how this pantomime was to end. The last look of the girl seemed to satisfy her; for suddenly casting her reboso from her shoulders, while it still remained hanging from her head, she threw both arms round my neck with even more than ordinary Mexican *abandon*, and embraced me with as much cordiality as though I had been one of her dearest friends or nearest relatives. That she was making herself extremely familiar, on an acquaintance which I felt assured must be very limited, was my first impression; but not to be outdone, either in politeness or cordiality, I too threw my arms around her after her own fashion, and *acted*, to say the least of it, as though meeting with one of my oldest and most esteemed acquaintances.

In the streets of New Orleans or New York such a meet-



ing would doubtless attract some little attention—not so in Mexico. The passers went by almost without deigning to notice us, and glad was I that they did so ; for I could not satisfy my own mind that the open street was altogether a befitting place for the enactment of such a scene. But who was my fair friend, and why did this accidental meeting afford her so much gratification ? These were questions I now asked myself. I placed a hand on either shoulder of the girl, gently disengaged myself, and then intently scrutinized her features with the hope of recognising one who must certainly be entitled to an acquaintanceship. I had an indistinct recollection of having seen her somewhere, but at what place, or under what circumstances it was impossible to recall to mind. The girl, however, was far from imagining the dilemma I was in, but on the contrary addressed me with as much familiarity as though we had known each other from childhood, expressing, over and over again, the great pleasure it afforded her to see me once more alive and at liberty, and then alluding to the time when I was first attacked by the small-pox with not a little feeling. This last remark was a clew to the whole mystery ; for I now at once recollected that she was the sister of one of the sergeants of our guard, and had frequently brought her brother his dinner at the place where we were confined when I was ill with the disease I have just spoken of. In common with all the women of the country, she had manifested great solicitude in our behalf, had expressed her ardent hopes that we might all recover our liberty, and in addition to this, had, on several occasions, kindly invited me to partake of such food as she had brought her brother. To repay her in some way, I had made her a trifling present ; but it was one she had not forgotten, as we fully proved by the cordial manner in which she greeted me on my first meeting her in the street some two months after.\*

As I was about shaking hands to leave her, for I did not much care about going through another scene quite so fami-

\* Let not the reader understand that an adventure of this kind—a meeting so cordial—is a common or every-day occurrence in the streets of Mexico, although, as I have stated, it seemed to attract little notice from the passers. The girl was probably much astonished and highly pleased to meet with one at liberty whom she had last seen sick and in prison, and in the warmth of her heart threw a greater degree of cordiality into her actions at this first meeting than is common even with the impulsive women of her country.



her as was that at our first meeting, she invited me to visit her at her mother's residence before leaving the country. With artless simplicity she told me that her relatives were poor—in circumstances humble—but that I should be welcome, and that her mother would feel pride if the stranger would but condescend to cross her lowly threshold. Promising to call upon her, I turned from the spot, and the next moment, after repeating for the third time the exclamation, "*¡Ah! señor, quanto me alegro de ver a V. afuera de es a maldita cárcel!*"\* she was lost to sight in the throng of passers which crowded the street.

The circumstance of the girl's telling me, openly, of the humble sphere and station in which she moved and lived, brings to mind one excellent trait in the character of the Mexican people—with them poverty is certainly no crime, is never insulted. The unfortunate mendigo, or beggar, is seldom or never spurned from the door of the rich; but on the contrary his misfortunes entitle him at least to respect if not to alms, and almost invariably both are bestowed. No concealment of poverty is attempted—the poor Mexican family, unlike that of the American or English in similar circumstances, never impoverishes itself still farther by forced endeavours to conceal its real necessities. Of such hospitality as the Mexican dwelling affords the stranger is always invited to partake; and while the master frankly admits his poverty, he at the same time uses it as an excuse for the scantiness of the repast to which he invites his guest. The stranger is not told that his presence is unexpected; that the butcher has neglected to furnish meat, with a threat to patronise him no more; that the bread has just given out and that there is no time to bake or send for a supply, or any of the thousand and one excuses a false and foolish pride invents in other lands to conceal its indigence—nothing of the kind is resorted to. "*Somos pobres*"—we are poor people—is the honest admission made by the Mexican to cover any deficiency in his entertainment.†

\* *¡Ah! sir, how much it pleases me to see you out of that bad prison!*

† Let it be understood that I am now speaking of the middle and lower orders. A concealment of poverty is no singular thing among such of the higher class as may have been reduced, and I have little doubt that many a family party may be seen rolling along the Alameda



As an offset to their many vices, the Mexicans certainly possess charity and hospitality in an eminent degree—virtues which cover a multitude of sins, and which are not only professed but practised in that country. The early Spanish missionaries, in their endeavours to convert the Indians to their faith, appealed to the heart and sense through the medium of the eye—spread before the natives the pomp and pageantry of their imposing religion with hands far from niggardly—and thus first estranged them from their idols and many of their more absurd ceremonies. Then, as I have before stated, by allowing them to ingraft some of their own superstitions upon the rites of the Catholic religion, they were enabled to bring them over to Christianity. Such the primary efforts, and such the results.

The early fathers next zealously inculcated that heavenly spirit of charity which teaches that we must clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and relieve the sick and distressed; and with such untiring ardour did they impress this article of their creed upon the natives, that it took root, and has increased and continued to the present day. For evidence, we have but to look at the hospitals for the sick in body and mind scattered through the country, to the institutions for relieving the distresses of the unfortunate, and to the different orders of sisters of charity, those meek handmaidens of benevolence, whose eyes are ever seeking the couch of sickness and whose hands are ever raised to succour with a beneficence that knows no tiring. It is not in Mexico alone that this holy feeling of charity towards the sick and helpless exists; but wherever the religion of Rome is known there do we find the same active benevolence exerted, the same attention to the wants of the suffering, and well would it be were other denominations of Christians to pattern after the Catholics in all that pertains to pity and compassion towards their sick and needy fellow-creatures—in plain terms, if they would make fewer professions and enter more into the real practice of charity.

I cannot close this subject or this chapter without a few words in relation to the present priesthood in Mexico—the faults of the holy brotherhood I shall allude to with reluctance, for from one and all I never received other than the

in the evening, in their carved and gilt coach, which is driven to great strait to procure a breakfast the next morning at all in keeping with the ostentation they outwardly assume.



kindest and most benevolent treatment. With whatever intolerant zeal they may preach to their congregations against the heretics, and with whatever vividness they may paint the purgatory to which all out of the fold of the true Church are destined after death, the Protestant stranger will seldom find other than a hospitality the most munificent within the gates of the padres. He will find them, too, men of liberal and enlightened views, well-educated and entertaining companions, tolerant and charitable, extremely good livers, and disposed to an indulgence in many of the luxuries and vanities of this lower world—in short, he will find that their numerous departures from the rule of conduct prescribed for them sit as easy upon their consciences as do their gowns upon their backs.

With the style of living and domestic relations of the Catholic priest we are taught to associate all that is abstemious, so far as relates to worldly affairs, and that such is the case in Ireland and in the United States, I know full well ; but he who believes that such a state of things exists among the brotherhood of Mexico is either wofully ignorant or wilfully blind. At his table, as I have stated above, the Mexican padre is a *bon vivant*, delighting in the good things of this life ; and however strongly he may inculcate upon his flock the necessity of strictly observing all fasts, his appetite frequently begets an obliviousness which turns every day alike into one of feasting while at his own table. Another thing : if all the male portion of the community in Mexico were attached to the priesthood, centuries would elapse before the race would become extinct unless some tremendous revolution in the morals of the brotherhood should take place ; for it is just as well known that they contrive to break the bonds of celibacy strictly enjoined upon them, as it is that such bonds are prescribed by the Church of Rome. Were the pope to be put in a *clairvoyant* state, and willed : o look into the domestic habits and relations of his agents in Mexico, a precious set of backsliding padres he would find.

That the good padres of that country have their *companeras*, or female companions, is well known, not only to foreigners, but to their own people, and equally well known is it that they invariably make their selections with a discrimination which shows that they are most excellent judges of female beauty. They rear families, too, and with great care and attention ; and although the unaccepted and more



ill-favoured portion of the women constituting his flock may think their padre very naughty, he finds means to close their eyes and mouths upon his peccadilloes, and all goes on smoothly.

I trust that the kind-hearted curas, from whom myself and companions received so many favours and attentions, will give me full pardon for thus exposing some of their weaknesses and frailties—absolution for my tell-tale sins : they will not attempt to deny anything I have said of them. They will also excuse me, when I say to any of them, that they are a class of enlightened, generous, good-natured, discerning, hospitable, hail-fellow-well-met, penance-hating, women-loving men, prone toward the enjoyments of the table, holding fast in great scorn, addicted to occasional gambling and wine-bibbing, and pretending no ignorance in matters of cock-fighting and sports of a like nature ; more particularly when I repeat that I entertain the best feelings towards one and all of them. In describing them, I have not “set down aught in malice,” but, on the contrary have spoken of them precisely as I found them.

The influence and power exerted by the priests of Mexico, over the ignorant and superstitious population, are immense—a fact as well known to them, and even better, than to the intelligent foreigners who have visited the country. They know, too, that the population they govern is led and kept in subjection by impostures the most flimsy, by deception the most transparent—for not to know this would be proving them fools, a title they do not deserve. They farther know, that in order to sustain themselves in their past and present position, to retain their supremacy and their fat benefices, they must persevere in their impostures and continue to gull their simple flocks—to hold the down-trodden mass in the same ignorance in which they have so long been kept—and hence their open intolerance towards all other sects, and their zealous care that no other religion than their own shall be preached or inculcated in the land.\*

\* No other religion than the Catholic is allowed or preached up to this day in Mexico, but a greater degree of tolerance is manifested towards the professors of other creeds now than formerly. I have read in some book—but its author I cannot call to mind—of a debate in the Mexican Senate in relation to the allowing Protestant foreigners a burial place. No such privilege was permitted them until within the last ten or fifteen years, and it was only through the urgent remonstrances of the then British minister that the point was conceded.



The almost countless number of ecclesiastics in Mexico are well aware that their expensive system of church domination inevitably tends to diminish the resources and retard the prosperity and advancement of the country ; but it is not in the nature of men holding power, whether Protestant or Catholic, political or religious, to resign it willingly, or give up any office of influence or emolument already within their grasp, because it conflicts with the interests or liberties of the people ; and to expect the priests of Mexico to abandon their sway or abdicate their ascendancy would be to suppose them more than men. All reformation of existing evils, either of Church or State, must come from the people themselves : whether the Mexican nation will ever be brought to know, feel, and exert itself against the powerful ecclesiastical and military establishments which are pressing and keeping it down, is a matter extremely problematical.

The Catholic reader must not construe these remarks into an attack upon his religion, for such is far from my intention—towards both faith and its professors I entertain no other feelings than of respect. My object has been to draw a rough picture of Catholicism in Mexico, and the power and means by which it is sustained, and in so doing I have confined myself strictly to the truth. In its essentials the Romish religion in Mexico is doubtless the same as it is in the United States, or in any country where toleration, that firm and enduring foundation of all political liberty, is known ; but in its administration there is as much difference between the two as there is between the religion of the Pilgrims of New-England and that of the Hindoos or New Zealanders.

One of the Mexican Senators, when the subject was debated in Congress, made remarks something like the following : “ There is one of four things we must allow these heretics who may happen to die in our land : we must eat, pickle, and send them out of the country, throw them in the fields, or bury them under ground. To eat them would be most repugnant—not one of my colleagues would taste the flesh of a heretic ; to send them out of the country would be expensive ; to throw them in the fields would be pestilence-breeding, and otherwise exceedingly offensive. I move, therefore, as the easiest, cheapest, safest, and every way the best course for us to adopt, is to allow them a burial-place”—and the motion was carried.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

**Mode of passing our Time.—Rambles over Mexico.—A murdered Soldier.—Touching Instance of Grief.—Release of Americans through the Exertions of General Thompson.—Visit to Tacubaya.—Cruel and Mysterious Murder of Egerton and his Mistress.—Visit to the Acordada.—Release of a Female Prisoner.—Mr. Navarro.—Story of his Wrongs.—Robbery and Crime in the Acordada.—Take Leave of Mr. Navarro.—Farther Description of the Prison.—Mexican Coaches and Mexican Coachmen.—Another Visit to Santiago.**

Our days, from the 21st to the 27th of April, were passed in roaming over the city and environs, in rides through the Alameda and Paseo, and in occasional visits to our companions still in confinement at San Lazaro and Santiago, while the evenings we whiled away at the Italian Opera, at the monte rooms in the vicinity of the Plaza, where heaps of doubloons dazzle and allure gambling adventurers, at fandangoes, in midnight walks over the city, or mayhap in seeing the feats of a company of pantomimists under the direction of the celebrated Herr Cline, who had engaged the Italian Opera House on alternate nights.

No city in North America, or perhaps in the wide world, can vie with Mexico as seen under the softening influence of moonlight—can equal the sweet and silent grandeur with which her palaces, churches, and innumerable establishments, rich in architectural beauty and exterior painting, are clothed by the subdued beams of the queen of night—and on one occasion I spent hours in wandering at random through her streets, completely absorbed by the beauty of the scene.

\* Madame Calderon draws a graphic picture of Mexico by moonlight. She says that it is the most flattering medium through which the city can be viewed, with its broad and silent streets, and splendid old buildings, whose decay and abandonment are softened by the silvery light; its ancient churches, from which the notes of the organ occasionally come pealing forth, mingled with faint blasts of music borne on the night wind from some distant procession; or with the



Attracted by the sounds of a mandolin, coming from an open door in a street near the market-place, I first took the precaution to gather such small amount of silver as I was possessed of at the time into my hands, placed my hands in my pockets, and entered the apartment. The dimly-lighted room was rendered even more obscure by a cloud of cigar smoke; yet I could plainly discern the faces of some dozen swarthy and blanketed léperos, and the same number of scantily-clad girls, watching the movements of a party of dancers who were executing one of the rude *jarabes* of the country—a species of dance consisting chiefly of shuffling with the feet and singing, and at the termination of which the males are expected to treat their partners to refreshments in the way of dulces.\* One of the girls politely made room for me upon a rude bench, but my stay was short—the fumes of cigar smoke, and the odour of pulque and mescal, drove me from the apartment at the conclusion of the first dance.

While passing a house but a few steps from this haunt of revelry, and certainly within hearing, I saw through the open door the face of a corpse, lying in a coarse box or coffin upon a table, and with some half-dozen long candles burning on either side. Two or three females, their faces covered with their hands as if in deep grief, were seated upon the floor near the head of the table, while a single soldier was unconcernedly smoking on a rough chest in one corner of the

soft music of a hymn from some neighbouring convent. The white-robed monk—the veiled female—even the ragged beggar, add to the picture: by daylight his rags are too visible. Frequently, as the carriages roll along to the opera, or as, at a late hour, they return from it, they are suddenly stopped by the appearance of the mysterious coach, with its piebald mules, and the *Eye* surrounded by rays of light on its panels; a melancholy apparition, for it has come from the house of mourning, probably from the bed of death. Then, by the moonlight, the kneeling figures on the pavement seem as if carved in stone. The city of Mexico by moonlight—the environs of Mexico at daybreak—these are the hours for viewing both to advantage, and for making us feel how

—“All but the spirit of man is divine.”

Such is the picture drawn of this splendid city, as seen under the influence of moonlight, by the author of “*Life in Mexico*”—a picture the strict fidelity of which I can attest.

\* *Jarabe* means, I believe, some species of sweetmeat, so that it can be called the “*Dance of the Sweetmeats*.”



apartment. Wishing to ascertain the circumstances attending the death of the man in the coffin, and to see any ceremony that might take place, I noiselessly entered the room. The soldier informed me that the unfortunate man upon the table was a comrade of his, who had been stabbed by a girl some two hours before in a fit of jealousy. The knife had reached the soldier's heart, killing him instantly, and one of the women on the floor was sobbing audibly her grief that he had died without the presence of a priest, and unconfessed. Whether she was his mother or sister I did not learn—she lifted not her face while I was in the room.

The lateness of the hour, the sorrowful spectacle before me, with the attendant train of thoughts upon the insecurity of life in Mexico the scene called up, now admonished me to hasten towards my quarters at the Gran Sociedad. The moon was riding high in heaven as I once more found myself in the streets, and shedding her mild and subdued light upon the innumerable religious establishments—now kissing, with sweet radiance, a towering dome or steeple; and anon, as some wandering cloud would brush hastily across her face, flitting and spectral shadows, as of misshapen giants, would stalk silently across the plazas and thoroughfares, and dissolve or lose themselves as the vapoury intruder which had created them resigned its momentary sway. The air was soft, pure, and balmy—such an air as would, in many countries, tempt thousands from their couches; yet the streets of Mexico were deserted—that stillness which can be heard, that indefinable hum which seems to be the breath of nature while asleep, reigned on every side—and I even essayed to advance on tiptoe, as if fearful of awaking the deep loneliness of night.

The startling "*quien vive?*" of a sentinel, after I had walked two or three squares without meeting a single living being, was a relief as I neared the Plaza Mayor. When within this noted square, the clattering of half a dozen horsemen, dashing over the rough pavement in hot haste as though to arrest some midnight assassin or quell some drunken brawl, was really a welcome sound—the previous quiet had been so intense that it was painful.

I crossed the Plaza and entered the Plateros. Ten steps further, I encountered two servants assisting homewards a staggering priest. Charity induced me to hope that the



padre was lame or infirm, but the strong light of the moon constrained me to believe that he had been dining or supping with some holy brother, and that his potations had been other than of chocolate or water. A walk of some few minutes brought me once more to my quarters, and still another five minutes added me to the list of sleepers within the Gran Sociedad; but the memory of that moonlight walk awoke with me in the morning, and the remembrance of the scenes which I beheld that night is vivid as was their reality.

On the morning of the 27th of April we were rejoiced to learn that three of our comrades in imprisonment—S. B. Sheldon, Allensworth Adams, and W. Tompkins—had been released through the interference of General Thompson. The liberated men were soon comfortably quartered in the city, and their wants provided for.

During the afternoon of the same day a party of some six or eight of us, composed of Englishmen and Americans, visited the garden of an Italian at Tacubaya, who kept a ninepin alley and provided refreshments for such foreign guests from the city as might visit the little village. Before we returned to the city, an English artist of great celebrity in Mexico, a landscape painter named Egerton, was pointed out to us by one of his countrymen, who also related several anecdotes referring to the many attainments of the artist.

While breakfasting the next morning, with an English gentleman in the city, we were shocked with the intelligence that Egerton, together with a female with whom he lived as his wife, and who possessed rare personal attractions and endowments as a landscape painter, had been cruelly murdered during the night. The whole city was at once thrown into the highest excitement by the startling news, and to increase still farther the commotion, many Mexican families, who had made Tacubaya their country residence, packed their furniture with all haste, and with their families returned immediately into the city, as if fearful of being massacred.

It seems that on the evening of the murder, Egerton and the unfortunate woman were walking in a large garden attached to their residence, as was their custom, and that while thus engaged they were attacked by some person or persons unknown, and both slain. The body of Egerton was found some distance from that of his companion, ran through apparently with a sword, while by his side was a walking-



stick much hacked, rendering it evident that he had fought to the last and made a stout resistance. The body of the female, who was on the point of becoming a mother, was also stabbed and otherwise horribly mangled, and this induced the belief that she too had resisted to the last. Her face was scratched and otherwise disfigured, a piece was bitten from her breast, her person had been abused, and the perpetrator of the outrage, as if fearing that she might not be recognised, had written her name upon a piece of paper and pinned it to a fragment of the dress that still remained upon her body, most of it having been torn off in the struggle which ended in her death. The formation of the letters was plainly English, a circumstance which went directly to prove that the murder was neither planned nor matured by Mexicans ; and to corroborate this belief, the money and watch of Egerton, and the jewelry of his companion, were untouched—rendering it certain that the act was not one of the native robbers, but of deep revenge. Among the thousand reports and rumours circulating in Mexico the next morning, was one to the effect that the murdered man had a wife and two children in England, and that some two years previous he had visited his native land with the intention of bringing them to Mexico ; but instead of returning with his wife, he had seduced and enticed away the murdered woman, who had since lived with him as his wife. Rumour also had it that the latter was engaged to be married to a young man in England at the time of her elopement with Egerton. Among the many speculations afloat among the countrymen of the unfortunate couple, the one which received the most credence was, that the murder had been planned in England, and effected by some acquaintance of the woman, as a matter of revenge. There was also a story that Egerton had been involved in a love affair with some fair Mexican ; but this report received little credence. The British Minister, Mr. Pakenham, exerted himself to the utmost to ferret out and arrest the perpetrators, in which he was assisted by General Valencia and the Mexican police and authorities ; but up to this time no clew to the authors of the horrible outrage has been discovered, and the whole affair remains a profound mystery.

Determined, if possible, to gain admission into the noted *Acordada*, and have one interview with my old companion, Antonio Navarro, before leaving Mexico, on the morning



after the murder I have just hastily described I obtained the assistance of a young and influential Englishman, who spoke confidently of his being able either to coax or bribe his way into the interior of the prison. Arrived in front, my companion pointed, through a barred window, to a species of form built upon an inclined plane, on which the bodies of such persons as have been murdered during the night are exposed in the morning, so that they may be recognised by their friends ! With a shudder at the thoughts of scenes of misery and deep woe which must almost daily be enacted in front of this revolting show-case of murder, by the wives, sisters, mothers, and other relatives of the victims, we passed onward.

After a few words of parley with a guard of soldiers stationed at the main entrance, we were admitted within the gloomy walls and commenced the ascent of a flight of solid but much-worn steps. Either side we found lined with ragged and squalid wretches, doubtless in some way related to the prisoners, and lounging about with the hope of being allowed to visit them. Arrived at the head of this dismal staircase, and after a few words of further parley, we were admitted through a strong and massive door. Here we at once found ourselves involved in a labyrinth of gloomy galleries and dark passage-ways. Soldiers, keepers, officers of the courts, gentlemen and *léperos*, were hurrying to and fro ; ponderous locks were turned in opening or closing heavy iron doors and gates on every side ; curses and deep imprecations were heard in unseen quarters ; while the clanking of chains, as they were dragged along the floors of the different apartments and across the stone pavement, of an immense patio below us, were grating harshly on our ears.

My companion asked a young man, who appeared to be in some way connected with the dreary prison, if he could be allowed a few minutes' conversation with Senor Navarro. " Presently," answered the individual addressed, at the same time ushering us into a small office on the outer side of the main corridor. A hard-featured man, who seemed as though he might be a captain of the night watch, was reading the *Diario del Gobierno* in one corner of this apartment, while a clerk was making out what appeared to be arrest-warrants or subpoenas for witnesses, at a desk at the opposite side. Here we remained anxiously, for some half an hour, until a



Mr. Navarro, but not the *right* one, stepped into the room and asked our business. On telling him that we had called to see another prisoner who bore the same name, he pointed to a heavy iron door or gate, leading to a species of anteroom, and said that we must inquire there. A word or two with a keeper through the grates sufficed to gain us admission, and no sooner had we entered than the door was closed and locked after us, with a clang that sent a shudder through our frames.

The young Englishman who accompanied me now again made known our wish to see the prisoner, Mr. Navarro, adding that we had received permission to that effect. The keeper, after telling us to wait a few moments, unlocked another grated door, which seemed to open into an inner corridor, and went in quest of my former comrade. During the few minutes that elapsed before his return, we had an opportunity of learning some of the secrets of this celebrated prison, and of seeing the cold, business-like air with which it is conducted. On every side it seemed as though we could hear keys turning in ponderous locks, the dreary sound of bolts, and the clanging of the heavy iron doors as they opened or were shut. On one side of the interior they appeared to be admitting prisoner after prisoner, crying aloud their names as the unfortunates crossed the gloomy thresholds: at an opposite side, the passage leading directly through the room in which we were standing, seemed to be the outlet through which the prisoners made their way on being liberated, for while we remained three or four were escorted through in the direction of the main entrance to the building from without. A sickly, deadly, prison-like smell, arising from damp and dirty walls and floors, ragged and filthy wretches covered with vermin, and a close and confined atmosphere, pervaded the apartment, and as if to make the air doubly offensive, the opening of a heavy door would bring in some freshly-foul current from the dismal interior.

Three times was the name of each liberated prisoner shouted aloud, and three times, it seemed to us, was the cry accompanied by sounds as of keys turning in the prison locks and of doors slowly opening. "Guadalupe Ribas" was heard, in low and muttered tones, from the inner recesses, followed by sounds almost indistinct, but which resembled those of a heavy door within doors as it swung



upon its hinges. "Guadalupe Ribas" was again heard, in tones far more distinct, succeeded by sounds which it was now plainly evident proceeded from a key turning in some heavy lock and the opening of still another door. "Guadalupe Ribas" once more resounded in our ears, louder and more distinct, a strong door grated heavily upon its hinges, and Guadalupe Ribas was passed through the room in which we were waiting. Who or what she was, or for what crime she had been confined, we did not learn; but for attempting the life of her lover in a fit of jealousy, or for some act of a like nature, she had probably been provided with lodgings within the gloomy walls of the Acordada. She was a pretty girl, of not more than eighteen, was neatly and cleanly dressed in garments brought probably by the friends who had procured her release, and with downcast eyes and hurried steps tripped from the place as the last door was opened.\*

No sooner had she departed, than a ponderous iron gate, leading apparently into another part of the prison, was slowly opened, and Mr. Navarro stood before us. Three months' close imprisonment, combined with the horrible associations of the Acordada, had wrought terrible changes in the appearance of my old companion—his unshaved face was pale and haggard, his hair long and uncombed, his vestments ragged and much soiled. On first entering the walls, his fellow-prisoners, composed of the most loathsome and abandoned wretches, had robbed him not only of his money but his clothing, and with emotion he now told us that the only sustenance he received was the scanty allowance of tortillas and frijoles given to each of the immense horde of felons and assassins by whom he was surrounded—a pittance barely sufficient to sustain life. He spoke of his wife and children at San Antonio, of a son at college in Missouri, and with tearful eyes begged me to convey to them information that he was still alive and not without hope of ultimate release. Stealthily, and without being seen by the surrounding Mexicans, we gave the unfortunate man what money we had—shaking hands with him three or four times previous to our final parting, and at each grasp slipping a few dollars into his possession: then, after expressing

\* I may have mistaken the name of this girl, although I have heard it pronounced three times.



our ardent wishes for his speedy liberation, we left the Acordada, but not until I heard the ponderous iron door close, with a dreadful clang, upon my old comrade.

As we were leaving the building, I looked down into an immense patio, paved with stone, where some hundreds of male prisoners were sitting, lounging, working, and sleeping—the apartment for the females I did not see. Near the main entrance we found several of the men belonging to the Santa Fé Expedition—Englishmen, Americans, Frenchmen, and Prussians—who had been liberated through the intervention of the ministers of their different governments. They were now awaiting an opportunity to see several Texan prisoners, who had been captured on the Rio Grande in the vicinity of Matamoros. I, too, was anxious to give these prisoners a call, although unacquainted with them; but as my companion had an engagement to fulfil in the city, was compelled to hurry off without accomplishing it. Another opportunity to visit the Acordada did not offer while I was in Mexico.

A full description of this dreary prison might not prove uninteresting, but I am unable to give it. Hundreds of wretches, male and female, and of every grade, are confined within its walls—chained, ill-fed, dirty, and ragged. In 1828 occurred the Revolution of the Acordada, and during some of the more recent pronunciamientos the prisoners, or many of them, have escaped; but in the spring of 1842 the place appeared to be stocked, even to overflowing, with murderers, thieves, counterfeiters, wives who had stabbed or poisoned their husbands, girls who had assassinated or attempted to assassinate their lovers—in short, a miscellaneous collection of every hardened class in Mexico, from the highest to the lowest. Some one of the guards, attendants, or keepers, should have been provided with a chain and a lodging within the prison while I was there, for among them they robbed me of a handkerchief. This was a mere trifle, however, for it is impossible to turn a corner in Mexico without having your pockets picked. Even in the churches, it is said, the léperos ply their calling; for while their spiritual wants are administered to by the priests, the ragged rascals have an eye upon their temporal need by introducing their fingers into the pockets of their neighbours, and this with a dexterity unknown in other lands.

On our return to the heart of the city, I proceeded at



once to the great coach stand in the Plaza Mayor for the purpose of hiring one of the clumsy vehicles to ride out to Santiago. In the Plateros I met a couple of Dutch broom-girls, with their "fader and big broder," squalling away at one of their street ballads, and with the usual tambourine, hurdy-gurdy, and dancing monkey accompaniments. One of the girls I recognised as a veteran itinerant, well known in the thoroughfares of every city of the United States. She spoke a little English, and on my asking her how she liked Mexico, she remarked that "dese peoples is very poor in dis city, so poor as we can't make de expenses." Presuming that the expenses of one of these families are far from heavy, it may be naturally inferred that the patronage they received in Mexico was not very extensive, and that the demand for brooms and ballads of Dutch manufacture is not sufficient to induce a farther exportation.

As I passed under the Portales, with the intention of examining a showy sarape exposed in front of one of the shops, I paused for a moment to watch the movements of one of the letter-writers of Mexico—*evangelistas* they are called—who was intently scrutinizing the countenance of a customer, seated upon a small box in front of him, as if to read his thoughts. If the customer was not an assassin, or a noted robber at least, his face certainly belied him; for a more hang-dog expression of countenance was never worn. As he whispered a few words in the attentive ear of the *evangelista*, I could not but think that the fellow was consenting to an offer made him to assassinate or rob some unfortunate person, and wished the letter-writer to make the fact known upon a note he was in the act of sketching.

These *evangelistas*, it is said, ply a profitable trade by writing letters for those of the inhabitants whose education, in the matter of expressing their thoughts by intelligible signs on paper, has been neglected—and of the entire population of the city of Mexico, I do not believe that five in every hundred adults can read and write. Where it is impossible, then, to communicate by verbal message, the professional letter-writers are called in requisition, and thus they are made the repositories of secrets innumerable, and secrets which it is well understood they will never betray. There, in the neighbourhood of the Plaza, do these *evangelistas* sit from day to day, their stock in trade consisting of pens, ink, and a few quires of assorted paper, with a



small tablet upon which to write. As their principal customers are girls, it is more than probable that love and intrigue are the themes upon which their talents are oftenest called in requisition; but that they are ready, for "a consideration," to indite epistles in relation to treason, assassination, or robbery, there can be little doubt.

As I approached the coach stand, I suppose there must have been something in my countenance which indicated that I could furnish a job, for twenty Mexican Jehus at once crowded around me, and each pointed out his establishment as in every way preferable to those of his fellows. Coachmen are the same the world over, and if you do not ascertain that their animals are faster, their vehicles newer, easier to ride in, and less liable to break down than any others, it will not be because these circumstances are not told you with open-mouthed vehemence. In the present instance I threw myself entirely upon the generosity of the assembled crowd of "whips," and after undergoing the usual amount of pulling and hauling, at last found myself in one of the coaches. In another moment the postillion mounted the "near wheel mule"—I believe that is the technical term—and I was whirled and jolted off on a short visit to my imprisoned friends. In an hour I was once more in the city, my hat suffering severely from the jolts of the coach as it crossed one or two of the gutters, while a new bump was developed on the crown of my head by sudden and forcible contact with the top of the vehicle.

A few words in relation to the appearance and construction of the Mexican coach, and I have done with this chapter. The superstructure, or body of the vehicle, is well enough, being somewhat after the fashion of our own light hackney-coaches; but the huge frame or scaffolding upon which it is swung is altogether a different thing, and gives the whole affair a clumsy, ill-proportioned appearance. The wheels are large, strong, placed at a distance of three or four yards apart, and were the immense platform upon which the top rests taken away, the American would at once suppose it to be a lumber carriage, such as timber and heavy stone pillars are transported on in his native land. The sides of the body are painted, the scaffolding upon which it rests elaborately carved with queer conceits, and not to speak far out of the bounds of reason, there is timber enough wasted in the construction of the whole to build a small class



Western steamer of the lighter model. Such is a hasty description of the coach: the animals and driver require a few words. The latter is generally a swarthy, brigandish, dashing fellow, dressed in a leathern jacket not lacking in embroidery and bell buttons, stout trousers of the same, with a broad-brimmed hat covered with oiled silk, and frequently decorated with silver cord and tassels. This is perched in a jaunty, devil-may-care style upon his head, and thus arrayed, the stranger, who has read some life of brigands illustrated with plates, cannot but think the Mexican *cochero* an individual even more ready to attack and rob his coach than to drive it. His mules are often large and strong animals, and although encumbered with heavy and useless ornaments attached to the harness, and frequently with a leathern case which completely covers their hind-quarters and tails, he contrives to get over the ground with a celerity which could hardly be expected. What the charge per hour is I have now forgotten—I only know that, like coachmen in other countries, the Mexicans get all they can, and almost invariably ask for more.



## CHAPTER XXXVII.

**The Alameda.—A Yankee Livery-stable-keeper in Mexico.—Family Parties in their Carriages.—Race with a Shower.—Reasons for the Decline of the Mexican Republic.—Our last Night in Mexico.—San Lazaro again.—Mexican Escort.—Mexico from the Mountain Sides. Arms and Equipments of our Party.—A Yankee Driver.—Roadside Crosses and Graves.—Senor Garcia and the Ladrones.—Mexican Dogs.—Arrival at Puebla.—Visit to the Texan Prisoners at the Presidio.—The Cathedral of Puebla.—Its great Riches.—In Bed and asleep.**

In my last chapter I related the particulars of a visit to the Acordada. Although that prison is situated near the Alameda, a celebrated park or resort for all the fashionables of Mexico, up to this time I had not entered its gates or examined its beautiful fountains. The day was now approaching when Mr. Ellis was to leave the capital for Vera Cruz, with such American prisoners as had been liberated; and, determined to enjoy the pleasure of a ride through the Alameda before our departure, a small party of us procured horses after dinner, and sallied out with the intention of galloping over the pleasure-grounds of the *élite* of Mexico.

April seems to be a month of "smiles and tears" in Mexico as with us; for although the sky was bright and clear when we mounted the nags procured for us at the stable of a Yankee, who has found his way to that city, and established himself in the business of "hiring out" horses, before we had been ten minutes in the saddle the heavens were overcast, and in five more the clouds were discounting with a liberality which threatened to lay the city under water. *Cargadores*, with their leather trousers rolled up, were standing at the different crossings, ready to carry any unfortunate pedestrian, who might be "caught out," over the swiftly-running street currents caused by the shower. So suddenly was the rain pouring upon us that there was no chance of an escape by retreating, and we therefore dashed



on towards the Alameda. A few minutes more, and rain clouds, and all were over. The rapidity with which showers come and go in these high mountain regions, for Mexico lies some seven thousand feet above the level of the sea, can scarcely be imagined.

We passed an hour pleasantly in the Alameda, and in the Paseo Nuevo, which is but a continuation, admiring the beautiful fountains, groves, walks, and rides with which they are adorned. Before we left the former, the carriage-roads which wind through it were thronged with the lumbering but costly vehicles of the higher orders, filled with ladies and children. At certain points the carriages would draw up in line, many of the fair inmates smoking their *cigarritoes* with much apparent gusto, while ever and anon a dashing horseman would amble up on his prancing steed, exchange a few words, and then canter off to exchange compliments with the ladies in some other coach. The reader must not suppose, however, that the cavalier starts off at a rapid gallop—he does nothing of the kind. There is little “go-ahead” in a spirited, showy, well-trained Mexican horse—the old saying of the country is, that “a true and devoted lover will ride and amble all day long under the window of his mistress.” If the animal “lifts” well, or, in other words, if he hoists his fore feet some ten or twelve inches at every step, and will make motions enough while going twenty yards to carry him half that number of miles, he is the horse for a Mexican’s money. To train him to this showy but most unnatural gait, it is said that, while a colt, large and heavy clogs are fastened to the fetlock joints of the fore feet by means of straps—these straps allowing the clogs some twelve inches play. To move onward at all, the animal is obliged to hoist the weights entirely from the ground, and they are never taken off until the colt has contracted such a habit of lifting as cannot be overcome. To give him a farther shuffling gait, the Mexican gentleman covers the haunches of his steed with a large leather casing which reaches to his hocks. The edges of this casing are trimmed with little iron points, which not only tinkle at every step, but pricks the horse’s hind legs, so much to his annoyance, that he throws them as far forward as possible. Thus, what with lifting his fore legs and mincing with his hind, a gait is contracted which more resembles the dancing of a circus-horse upon a plank than aught else I can liken it to. A cruel bit, of Mameluke



pattern, which causes the horse to curve his neck, champ, and froth incessantly at the mouth, completes the fit-out of the Mexican gentleman on a pleasure ride.

We had intended to make the entire circuit of the Paseo Nuevo; but a small cloud in the direction of one of the snow-capped mountains warned us that another shower was brewing, and that to escape it we must be moving homeward. Fortunately, our Yankee livery-stable-keeper had brought with him his inherent utilitarian principles of getting over as much ground as possible in the shortest time, and had taught his animals rather to annihilate miles than minutes—a circumstance which saved us a second soaking; for as we clattered through the streets at a rapid pace, the shower which had driven us from the Alameda was following close at our heels and gaining upon us at every step. The full weight of it was falling as we threw ourselves from our jaded animals under the archway which formed the entrance to our quarters.

We had now but one more day to remain in Mexico, and I felt that I had yet scarcely seen half the curiosities of which the proud city boasts. Santa Anna himself, the great man who has risen above reverses that no common intellect could have combated so successfully, I had never set eyes upon—he moved not from the palace while we were in the city at liberty, or if he did we were not aware of it. All the foreigners—American, English, and French—spoke of him as a man extremely courteous and affable in his intercourse; of polished and most agreeable manners; in short, the last person who could be suspected of the many acts of oppression, tyranny, broken faith, ambition, avarice, and treachery of which he has been accused. To obtain at least a glimpse of this man was the ardent desire of us all; but we were disappointed. His lady was lying dangerously ill at the time, which may have been one reason that prevented him from appearing in public.\*

\* Madame Santa Anna is spoken of by all as an estimable woman, of great kindness of heart, and it was reported that she was untiring in her exertions to have the treatment of the Texan prisoners mitigated. On the 19th of April she was thought to be lying at the point of death, and a solemn service in the cathedral was held, and the last sacrament administered to the sufferer. It was said at the time, but with what truth I know not, that ten thousand dollars' worth of wax candles were burning within the walls of the cathedral at the same moment. The magnificence of such a spectacle can hardly be con-



No farther proof is wanting of the great talent—perhaps I should call it cunning—of Santa Anna, than the simple fact that he has been able, in the face of adverse circumstances apparently insurmountable, and in direct opposition to the known wishes of a large majority of the inhabitants, to regain and retain a supremacy which amounts to absolute power. With every variety of discordant element arrayed against him—with popular and powerful military men known to be inimical in different quarters, with a Constituent Congress opposed to him, with reverse after reverse and defeat after defeat staring him in the face—above all these he has risen, and at this time is really in the possession and enjoyment of a power such as the Autocrat of all the Russians would hardly dare to wield. That his arbitrary and despotic government is the best that could be adopted, to keep the people in subjection, can hardly be doubted by any one who has seen Mexico; yet not one jot of credit does Santa Anna deserve for thus ruling the land, as his own selfishness rather than a love of country actuates his every movement. There are many liberal, enlightened, and well disposed statesmen among the Federalists of Mexico—men of great moral honesty, and earnestly desirous of placing the government of the country upon a republican basis—but they have an ignorant population to deal with, a population entirely incapable of governing themselves; to this may be added the influence and power of the priesthood; and as if this was not enough, the ambitious and selfish schemes of Santa Anna, and after him some half-dozen military leaders who only lack his talent and energy to make them equally opposed to the supremacy of civil power—with all these drag weights upon their efforts what hopes can the friends of free government entertain of even ultimate success? The day has gone by when a priest-ridden population, governed by a military despotism, can make headway in the great race of advancement which has been commenced by Anglo-Saxon toleration, and by the civil and religious liberty which the latter race enjoy. That Santa Anna or such a man as Santa Anna, unless some tremendous revolution takes place in the very natures of the

ceived, much less described—such a flood of light illuminating the rich adornments of the church, and the showy and imposing dresses and brilliant ornaments of the priests officiating on the occasion.



inhabitants, will continue to govern Mexico until she is swallowed in that vortex which appears to be yawning to receive her, is certain—a vortex formed by the liberal spirit of universal education, free toleration of religion, and that stern and inflexible love for equal rights now spreading through the earth, which compels ambition to sacrifice personal feelings to the public good.

The evening previous to our departure from Mexico was spent in cleaning and loading pistols, packing up, and making ready for the tiresome and hazardous journey to Vera Cruz. The exact date I have forgotten, as I took no note of time or circumstance after my release—but that it rained incessantly during the earlier part of the night I well remember. The diligence set off at three o'clock in the morning, and as we all had much to do no one retired to rest. About midnight, and while I was at the rooms of Mr. Ellis, a Mexican officer arrived in great haste, with an order for the release of Captain Hudson—Santa Anna, I believe at the request of the then Governor of Connecticut, having consented to give him up. Captain H., however, as is already known, had put it out of the power of the Provisional President to exercise another act of "*benevolence*" towards the United States, by taking the responsibility of liberating himself.\*

\* In the published correspondence, in relation to the release of the American prisoners attached to the Santa Fé Expedition, it is openly asserted that we were released, not as an act of justice, but purely from *benevolent motives*! I will quote one or two passages from a letter addressed to General Thompson by M. de Bocanegra, and dated "Mexico, April 23, 1842." In this letter General T. is informed "That his excellency the Provisional President, in consideration solely of the cordial friendship by which the Mexican Republic is united to the United States, has been pleased to accede to the repeated petitions addressed by Mr. Powhatan Ellis, conjointly with the other diplomatic ministers, by means of notes and private conferences, to the effect that those persons among the Texan prisoners from New Mexico should be liberated, who, according to the said notes, are citizens of the said States, and who on incorporating themselves with the Texan force, had no intention to make war on the Republic." M. de Bocanegra next goes on to say that Santa Anna, "though he has on this occasion done an act of benevolence, in order to prove to the United States how much he desires to preserve the relations which now fortunately exist between the two nations, protests that for the future, every individual of any nation whatever, who may be found in the Texan ranks, and may be made prisoners by the Mexican troops, shall be subject, without ransom, to the laws of war."



At half past two o'clock in the morning we took our leave of General Thompson, who had been employed up to that hour in writing and making out his despatches, and set out with bag and baggage for the Casa de Diligencias, from which the stage starts. After some half hour passed in weighing and stowing trunks and valises, each passenger being compelled to pay extra if he is the possessor of more than an *arroba*, or twenty five pounds of baggage, we finally entered the coach, some eight or ten Americans in all, and once more shaking hands with Mr. Mayer and several of our countrymen, who had lost one night's sleep for the purpose of "seeing us off," the driver cracked his whip and we rattled over the pavements at a rapid rate.

As we passed the old hospital of San Lazaro, which lies immediately to the left of the road leading to Vera Cruz, I could not resist taking a last look at its gloomy walls, now indistinctly seen by the dim light of morning. Not without a shudder did I recall the revolting scenes, dreary hours of imprisonment, wild orgies, and imposing night funerals, I had passed and seen within its long and dismal halls, nor could I think of my comrades still confined there, and of the horrible associations of the place, without a fervent hope that the Texans might speedily be released. Five minutes more, and we had passed the garita, and were speeding along over the open thoroughfare. An escort of dragoons, provided by Santa Anna for "El Ministro" and his party, were galloping on either side of the stage, their lances and sabres rattling at every movement of their horses.

The dull gray of morning was slowly dispersing as we commenced the toilsome ascent of the mountains which divide the valley of Mexico from that of Puebla, and long before the summit was reached the full light of day was shining far and wide over the scene below us. The arid waste which surrounds the great city we had just left was softened down, and served to heighten the magnificence of the innumerable towers and domes still plainly visible. The distant mountain sides were clothed with a fleecy covering of

A very pretty piece of Mexican kindness, this, ingeniously interwoven with Mexican vapour ! I certainly feel under great obligations to my own government for its petitions, and to Santa Anna for his exceeding *benevolence*, but I doubt whether I should ever tax either of them again were I arrested under the same circumstances and should the same opportunities to escape be within my reach.



clouds, [the wasted receptacles of the last night's shower; and as the sun gradually lifted the curtain of vapour the bold and precipitous sides were brought out in striking grandeur. As we were approaching the last turn in the road the sun suddenly shot up from behind the mountain tops; for an instant the valley was lit up as by enchantment, and the next moment a projecting cliff shut out the brilliant scene—we had looked our last upon the city of the Montezumas.

An hour's ride over the rough mountain country now brought us to the breakfast-house, a noted stand by the road-side, and kept, if my memory serves me, by a Frenchman. It was not until we had dragged our cramped and benumbed limbs from the stage that our full strength and imposing armament were brought to full view, and we ascertained that our diligence was a perfect arsenal of war's dread implements of destruction. Judge Ellis had a sword in his hands, while a belt stuck full of United States boarding-pistols was strapped around him. In the hands of some of my companions were double-barrelled guns—and the butt of a pistol or the handle of a bowie-knife was peering from every pocket. While in Mexico we had breakfasted, dined, and supped full of horrible tales of robbers and robberies upon the road to Vera Cruz; but as we now counted our strength, we felt a confidence in our ability to withstand a successful siege from four times our number of *los senores ladrones*, and would even have paid extra fare could we have been ensured a small brush with the lawless freebooters. "We're good for fifty of 'em, *sure*," was the remark of one of our companions, as we displayed our arms upon a table in the breakfast-house, and I have little doubt that such odds would have fared badly. The greatest risk we ran, in all probability, was of accidentally shooting each other; for while crowded in the stage it was impossible to look in any direction without seeing the muzzle of a loaded pistol staring in our faces.

After making a breakfast which mainly consisted of mutton, fowls, eggs, and frijoles, aided by chocolate and some excellent claret provided by Judge Ellis, and after hearing a much exaggerated tale of a party of robbers, recently seen prowling in the neighbourhood of Rio Frio, we once more buckled on our armour and took our places in the diligence. The morning was mild and agreeably pleasant in this high mountain region, so much so that two or three of



us soon took our seats outside with the driver, a well-informed, entertaining Yankee, who knew the history of every roadside cross which lifts its head over the remains of some murdered occupant of the rude grave below. With whatever skill the Mexicans may be able to manage a single horse in the saddle, the science of handling some half dozen from the box of a stage-coach is above their comprehension, and a feat they have not the temerity to undertake—and hence the owners of the different lines of diligences invariably procure the services of Yankees when they can be obtained.

Your stage-driver is an entertaining fellow go where you will; full of interesting stories, and ever prone to relate the history of every remarkable point upon his route. Ours we found unusually amusing, perhaps from the abundant material at his hand of perilous encounters with banditti and hair-breadth 'scapes on occasions innumerable. The driver of the Mexican diligence is a *neutral* in any attack that may be made, as it would be more than his place is worth should he side with the passengers against the ladrones; yet it frequently occurs that the latter blaze away at random at the stage, and on more than one occasion the driver has lost his life although it was not sought. His duty is—and nothing else is expected of him either by the highwaymen or the passengers—to jump from his box at the first onset, hold his lead horses by the head until the affray is over, and let it terminate as it will he is not molested intentionally. He knows every robber upon the road, yet never exposes them, for the very simple but satisfactory reason that his life would pay the forfeit if he did.

The business of robbing the stages is reduced to a perfect system in Mexico; and it is shrewdly hinted that many men, of respectable station in the larger cities, are in some way connected with the bands, and have no hesitation in taking to the road when other resources fail. A spy is almost invariably stationed at the stage-house as the coach is about starting, whose duty it is to take down a list of the passengers, their appearance, arms, and the amount of luggage with which they travel. If the stage happens to be filled with well-armed foreigners—Americans, English, German, or French—it is generally allowed to pass unmolested; for well do the ladrones know that they will not give up their property without a desperate struggle. On the contrary,



should the travellers be chiefly Mexicans, with but a foreigner or two among them, the load is at once put down as legitimate game, as the former are almost invariably looked upon as non-combatants, who would rather be searched than shot. The moment the spy ascertains the character and condition of the passengers, with the chances of a successful attack, he gallops off to give the information to his companions, who are quietly waiting for him in some dark defile or lonely barranca.

Should an attack be deemed expedient, the diligence is suddenly waylaid in some well-known spot; the passengers, if no resistance is made, are compelled to descend from the vehicle, lie down with their faces to the earth, and then submit to a thorough searching. The baggage, in the meanwhile is overhauled, and every article of value abstracted, after which the unfortunate travellers are permitted to gather themselves up and proceed on their journey. The robbers, whose faces are almost invariably concealed by black crape, have the reputation of being very gentlemanly in their conduct, treating ladies with much respect and consideration, and apologizing to the other sex for the trouble and detention circumstances have compelled them to cause. A friend of mine, who was unfortunate enough to be travelling this road in the spring of 1843 with no other than Mexican companions, was robbed near Rio Frio by a party of ladrones. Their captain, as he turned to ride off, touched his hat very politely, and before giving our American the customary "adios," said that he was extremely sorry thus to take liberties with and incommode a stranger, trusted that the money of which he had despoiled him would prove no serious loss, and after hoping that he had more where that came from, dashed off at a canter! The fellows never seem anxious to shed blood, firing into the stage only when they anticipate resistance; on no other occasion is the life of the driver placed in jeopardy.

A volume of interesting anecdotes might be written, filled entirely with accounts of the different robberies which have taken place between the city of Mexico and Vera Cruz. One only I will relate—a story told of the laughable indignities offered the celebrated Senor Garcia, Malibran's father, while returning from the capital after giving a series of successful concerts. I have now forgotten the exact point, but the very spot was pointed out to me where the lawless brigands first



waylaid the great vocalist, as well as the stone or little hillock upon which they mounted him after the robbery, and compelled him to sing several of his most popular pieces. It would seem that the rascals had been regular patrons and warm admirers of Garcia while in the city; for they not only knew him at once, but were well acquainted with his music. After searching and robbing him, they next perched him upon a little eminence, gathered around in a circle, and after taking off their hats, one of them called for a favorite air. It was in vain that the senor pleaded—told the brigands he was hoarse, out of voice, indisposed—nothing would do but he must give them a song. They openly told him that they had listened, with pleasure, to his surpassing efforts in the city, and that they could not think of allowing him to leave the country without giving a “farewell concert!”—the thing was impossible. Garcia, with piteous face, again begged them to excuse him, and was about to give a peremptory refusal, when a call for a favourite Italian aria, accompanied by a click of the lock of a carbine and a significant look from one of his tormentors, convinced him that he must sing now or for ever after hold his peace.

With broken and tremulous voice he commenced his song. A shower of hisses followed, which plainly told that the strange audience would not put up with an effort so unworthy of the great vocalist. Another trial was made—better perhaps than the first, but still falling far short of what the rascals knew Garcia to be capable of—and again they manifested their disapprobation by hisses. Wound up to a pitch of desperation; and, it is even said, stung with mortification and wounded professional pride at being hissed, the senor once more attempted the aria. This time he was more successful, for applause rather than hisses greeted its conclusion. Another favourite piece was then called for, and this was given with even greater effect, and met with more decided marks of applause: the rascals were connoisseurs of music. Garcia improved, as the story runs, with every song, and after giving several pieces in a style which was perfectly satisfactory to the brigands, he was greeted at the conclusion of the last, with a shower of “bravas” and three rounds of applause! Such is the tale related of the great vocalist and his audience of robbers.

We passed the Rio Frio without molestation, and early in the afternoon entered the galley of Puebla. Scattered along



by the road side were the adobe houses of the inhabitants, from each of which as we rattled by, some half dozen worthless Mexican dogs would jump and dash at the stage. A shower of barks and yelps would be duly honored by us with a shower of bullets and buckshot; and as several of them were seen to tumble over and commence kicking it is fairly presumable that the sun did not rise the next morning on so many live dogs as on that of the day when we passed through the once rich and fertile valley of Puebla.

To the right of the road, in the distance our driver pointed out to us the grand pyramid of Cholulab, with what is left of that once sacred city. The vast mound is fast crumbling away while the former magnificent city at its base, with its many inhabitants is now said to be falling into ruins and depopulating more and more every year.

About four o'clock we entered Puebla, covered with dust and with our faces much burned by the hot noon day sun. As we rattled down one of the main streets the Presidio where the Texans were confined was pointed out to us—a short ride farther and the plaza, with the rich and imposing cathedral of Puebla, was in plain sight. With a crack of his whip, and faster pace of his horses, our driver dashed by the Portales—crowds of admiring urchins gazing with eyes open to the utmost, while groups of girls scampered far out of the way, as if fearful of being ran over by the stage. A short and abrupt turn of the street, and a trot of but a few yards further, and we were landed safe and sound at the Casa de Diligencias, the best public house in Puebla. Here we found the worthy American consul, Mr. Black, with Messrs. Snively, Torry, Houghtaling and Buchanan, four of our former comrades in imprisonment who had been given up to Judge Ellis, all comfortably quartered and awaiting our arrival.

No sooner had we washed the dust from our faces, and shaken and brushed the thickest of it from our clothes, than accompanied by the late minister, we visited the Texan prisoners at the Presidio. Our unfortunate comrades were here confined in the same yard with hundreds of Mexican criminals of the worst class, chained together in pairs employed during the day in the city cleaning ditches, sewers, and other dirty work; covered with every species of vermin, poorly clad, worse fed, and at night herded and guarded by the low wretches who surrounded them. No comparison



between their treatment and the prisoners at Santiago can be drawn, for the former were deprived of such comfort as is found in a sufficiency of food, comparatively clean quarters, and the absence of such association as the lowest malefactors afford. Thus were men whom Santa Anna openly avowed prisoners of war, treated in Puebla. The population of this city are said to entertain more hostile and bigoted feelings towards "heretics and dogs" as many of them are wont to call the Americans and English, than those of any other place in Mexico—it may be that this bitter hatred induced the inhuman treatment upon the poor Texans.

After passing some half hour in the loathsome prison, receiving such messages and letters as the inmates wished us to convey to their friends in Texas and the United States, we took our leave of them and hurried back to our hotel to a late dinner which had been provided. I had wished to examine the interior of the rich cathedral so celebrated in the works of every traveller through Mexico for its exceeding elegance and splendor of adornment; but the dusky shades of evening had set in before I reached the edifice—the light was shut out from the interior and with it went my hope of seeing the costly chandelier, the famous statue of the Virgin, which is described as almost crushed under the weight of diamonds and precious stones, with the other rich ornaments that decorate this temple—all which wealth would be infinitely better applied were the priests to open their hearts and devote it to the construction of railroads and canals, mending the thoroughfares, and ameliorating the condition of the lower classes, and even paying off a portion of the immense internal and foreign debt under which the country groans.

It was while this cathedral was in progress of erection that the miraculous aid of angels in the good work was discovered. Every morning, on the assemblage of the Mexican builders they noticed with much surprise that unseen hands had been toiling through the night in the construction of the walls. That they must be angels was considered a matter of course—through no other agency could the heavy walls arise—and from that day to this the city has been called *Puebla de los Angeles*, or "City of the Angels." It is a neat, well built place, containing some sixty or seventy thousand inhabitants, and of late has been gaining additional importance from the establishment of numerous factories in the vicinity. **I**



roamed for some two hours through the streets, squares, and market-places, jostling my way through a crowd of ragged leperos on one occasion for the purpose of obtaining a closer look at a long and brilliantly-lighted religious procession. From a dark doorway I watched the kneeling groups of men and women congregated on either side of the street as the procession passed, the light from the numerous torches bringing out their swarthy features in bold relief, as with deep devotion they raised their eyes upward and moved their lips apparently in prayer. In half an hour afterward, knowing that the diligence was to start at three the next morning, I repaired to the hotel, and was soon asleep.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

**Preparations for Departure.—High Words with a Mexican Stage-agent.—A Scotch Traveller.—Leave the “City of the Angels.”—Arrival at El Pinal.—Roadside Graves.—A wild Mexican Steed and his Antics.—A noted Stand for Robbers.—The Mal Pais and Cerro de Pizarro.—Arrival at Perote.—Visit to the Texan Prisoners.—A French Lady.—Coldness of the Mountain Air.—Tierras Frias.—Arrival at Las Vigas.—Wild Mountain Scenery.—Volcanic Formations.—El Cofre de Peroteé.—Strange Indian Legend.—Remarkable Change of Scene and Climate.—Halt at the House of a Mexican Lady.—La Guerra Rodriguez.—Arrival at Jalapa.**

We were awaked at two o'clock in the morning by a servant with the old announcement, which has annoyed so many thousands of travellers, “stage is ready, gentlemen.” Huddling on our clothes as rapidly as possible, we descended to the patio of the hotel, stumbling over a sleeping Mexican rolled in his blanket in the passage-way, and treading upon one leg of a worthless cur, which went whining off on the other three.

Repairing at once to the stage, we found one of our passengers engaged in high words with the agent, a Mexican, who insisted upon sending a set of harness to Peroteé upon the top of the coach. There were fourteen passengers belonging to our party, all good-sized men, and these fourteen were to be stowed in and upon a common, Troy-built coach, intended only to carry nine inside, with a seat for two on the box with the driver. Of course three of us were compelled to perch ourselves upon the extreme top of the coach, and as a heavy harness, with its strong iron buckles and other appurtenances, afforded anything but a soft or comfortable bed, its transportation by this particular stage, it was at first respectfully contended, was putting all hands to serious annoyance. The agent said this was a matter we must settle among ourselves—the harness he was obliged to forward by this conveyance. A passenger, who had already taken his station upon the top of the stage, now expressed a doubt



whether the objectionable baggage would be allowed peaceable and quiet possession of its quarters in case the Mexican insisted upon giving it a berth—the latter, after a little frothy vapour, threw the harness upon the stage. The next moment a shower, very much resembling horse collars, traces, and girths, was falling upon the head of the agent, accompanied by a general laugh at his expense. Finding it impossible to carry his point, the fellow now slunk into the office, muttering a variety of unbecoming Spanish oaths as he went.

By this time our trunks were all safely stowed in the boot and the inside of the stage was wedged with the substance of as many as could possibly crowd into the contracted quarters. Some of the younger passengers—harum-scarum fellows who were anxious that the ladrones might give us a call upon the road—recommended that we should all conceal our weapons under our sarapes and cloaks. A crowd of Mexicans were standing around the diligence, some of whom were evidently spies; and it was thought that if they should discover no arms about us they might give their companions such information as would draw them into a snare of guns, pistols, swords, and bowie-knives. But this plan was overruled by one of the older and more prudent travellers, on the ground that the robbers, should they see fit to attack us, would probably fire directly into the stage without previous parley, and thereby gain an advantage at the expense, perhaps, of the lives of some of the passengers.

As we were about leaving, a Scotchman came hastily down the stairs, dragging a trunk by the handle, and shouting that he was a passenger for Vera Cruz, and must have a seat. There are two stages running daily between the city of Mexico and Puebla, in one of which, with a party of Mexicans, he had made the trip on the previous day; but as this stage went no farther, the Scotchman was anxious to go directly on with us. He was a stout, healthy man, dressed in a suit of blue clothes, and as he well knew that we were all armed, no better chance for a safe transit to himself and chattels could possibly offer. We told him there was no room—no possible opening for another passenger: he said he had a sum of money about him, and that if we did not give him a seat he should be robbed of it the next day—he was sure he should. He even announced to some of



the by-standing Mexicans, in their own language, the fact of his having money ; for in his eagerness to obtain a seat with us he was drawn into a departure from prudence not very common with his countrymen. On finally ascertaining, to his own conviction if not satisfaction, that there was no room for him—not even a chance to hang on to any part of the stage—he reluctantly gave up all hope of prosecuting his journey until the morrow. As we left the place, after having shaken hands for the last time with Mr. Black, we could still see the sorrowful countenance of the poor Scotchman, as he stood in the patio with one end of his trunk resting against his knee, whilst his fingers were securely clasped round the handle.

After a short drive we passed the outskirts of the “City of the Angels,” and struck into the open country. One of the most noted stands, or rather hiding-places, for the robbers, is within hearing of the town, and just as we were reaching the spot a clattering of horses’ hoofs was heard rapidly approaching. Fourteen pairs of eyes were instantly peering into the darkness to ascertain the nature of the party, while at least twice fourteen pairs of pistols were pointing in the same direction to be ready for any emergency. The horsemen turned out to be a detachment of some half dozen dragoons, sent out from the barracks to protect and succour us in case of an attack from the ladrones. Muffled in their yellow military cloaks, for the early morning air was raw and biting, the fellows appeared well enough as their horses clattered along on either side of the stage ; but we were now seeing them in the most favourable light. Long before the sun had risen above the eastern mountains, dispelling that darkness and chillness which precede daybreak, our doughty guardsmen had uncloaked themselves, and sat before us in all their inefficiency. Very respectable scarecrows I have little doubt they would have made, stuck about judiciously in a corn-field ; but I have a better opinion of the Mexican brigands than to suppose, for one moment, that such a set of ill-appointed, badly-armed apologies for soldiers could in the least intimidate them if they had meditated an attack. We openly told them they might canter back to their barracks, and finish their morning nap ; for no more dependance could be placed on them than on an equal number of the crosses stuck by the roadside. With the first appearance of danger they would undoubtedly have left us,



and at a speed as great as their horses could conveniently accomplish, if not faster.

At a rapid pace we sped across the valley which encircles Puebla, passing the noted robbing-post without meeting other than the usual number of market people, wending their way to the city and driving their donkeys before them. Our driver allowed his horses to slacken their pace as we ascended the pine-clad hills known as the Pinal. This lonely forest is another noted haunt for the ladrones; but we passed through it seeing nothing more alarming than the numerous crosses which pointed to the spots where murder had done its work, and hearing naught more terrifying than the wind sighing mournfully in the pine tops—a sad requiem, it seemed, for the rest of the departed victims. Many thrilling tales did our driver relate of these roadside graves.

About the middle of the day we changed horses at a meson built near a large spring of warmish water. The circumstance I recollect from the fact that one of the fresh horses was a wild, vicious creature, not only disposed to break our necks, but having no apparent marked regard for the safety of his own. In Mexico they frequently hitch five horses to a stage, two on the pole as is the custom in the United States, while the three leaders are harnessed abreast. In the present instance one of the leaders acted as wildly as would a fresh caught mustang; leaped entirely over the heads of his fellows, wound himself up in the traces, and reared, pitched, and kicked in such a manner, notwithstanding the efforts of half a dozen Mexican hostlers, that he was soon free from all encumbrances. After several attempts, the driver was so far successful as once more to place harness upon the vicious animal's back; but no sooner had the stable boys released him from the strong halters with which he had been held, than he jumped and dashed off at a furious pace, imparting his own fright to the rest of the team, and threatening us all with a dangerous upset. For some distance the mad steed pressed forward, the driver in vain attempting to check him; and it was only when much exhausted by his efforts that he slackened his onward course in the least. It was now the driver's turn. "You've run a spell on your *own* account," said the Yankee, addressing the tired animal; and then, after a loud crack from his whip, finished the sentence with "you've got to run a piece farther on *mine*." And run he did, and at a rapid pace too; for determined to subdue



his vicious spirit, and to break him of his mad pranks, the driver forced him onward until the reeking team could no longer withstand the killing pace. A short time after this occurrence, we approached still another celebrated stand for robbers—a dreary spot upon a wide, sandy plain, with a few scattering clumps of thornbushes and rocky hills in the vicinity, which afford a cover for the gentlemen of the road. As we drew near the spot an escort of badly-mounted dragoons came out to meet us from an adobe-built hovel some little distance from the road. As they formed themselves on either side of the stage they were told that we could dispense with their services; but the valiant fellows, thinking of the money which it is expected the passengers will pay them, and of the drunken frolic which is sure to follow, insisted upon seeing us *safely* through all dangers as far as Peroté.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon, after we had crossed the *mal país*, or bad country, as it is called, and taken a survey of the huge volcanic mass known as the Cerro de Pizarro, that we reached the stage tavern at this dreary and desolate place. As we entered the patio of the inn, a crowd of bad-visaged fellows congregated about us, scrutinizing our weapons and the general appearance of the party. If some of them were not robbers and cut-throats, their faces villainously belied them.

No sooner had we safely secured and locked up our baggage, than we inquired and took the way towards the castle in which General McLeod, and a party of the officers and men attached to the Santa Fé Expedition, were confined. A short parley with an officer at the ponderous gate of the fortress, and we were permitted to enter. Our former comrades had just returned from their work at a neighbouring stone quarry. They crowded around us, and knowing that our visit must necessarily be short, with eager inquiries asked intelligence in relation to their friends at Puebla and the city of Mexico—pressing question upon question in such rapid succession that to answer one half of them was impossible. Their situation in many respects, was preferable to that of the prisoners at Puebla, for their quarters were cleaner and more comfortable, and the Mexican criminals were confined in separate apartments; yet the castle is but a cold and dreary place at best, being situated at an elevation far above the level of the sea, bleak and exposed, and where



the biting winds from the surrounding snow-clad mountains have full and powerful sway. After receiving messages and letters innumerable from the poor fellows, and promising to make known their situation, we bade them farewell, and retraced our steps to the tavern.\*

Here we found that the stage from Jalapa had arrived, and that our supper was ready—a vile, greasy repast, to which nothing lent sauce or aid save the remembrance of worse, and the hearty appetites we had contracted by our long ride. Among the passengers from Vera Cruz was a French lady with a little child, the mother on her way, without a protector, to join her husband at Zacatecas. We could not but admire the boldness of the lone female, who had undertaken a journey so long and so perilous.

After smoking our cigars, and watching the ice-incrusted sides of the towering mountain peaks in the vicinity, as the setting sun clothed them with silvery lustre, we retired to rest. At two o'clock in the morning we were aroused from sleep by a servant, and in half an hour, after swallowing a cup of chocolate in the dirty cocina attached to the tavern, we muffled ourselves in cloaks, greatcoats, and sarapes, and, shivering with the early morning cold of this bleak region, took our seats in the diligence and were again on the road towards Jalapa.

If the air was raw and chilly at starting, it was doubly so as we ascended the gradual slope which brings the traveller near the base of the celebrated Cofre de Proté. We had entered the gorge of a gloomy barranca, such of us as were within the coach nestling close to each other for warmth and with the vain hope of finishing the sleep from which we had been disturbed, when the report of a heavy pistol from the top, and the cry of "*Ladrones!*" "*Ladrones!*" startled us as with an electric shock. The loud laugh from the region of the driver instantly convinced us that it was a false alarm—an eccentricity, merely, of some wag on the top of the coach, who only wished to get a up little excitement. The place chosen was certainly well adapted for a joke of the kind; for a more dark, dismal, practical haunt to all outward seeming was never chosen by freebooters.

\* Notwithstanding the isolated situation and great strength of the castle of Peroté, several successful escapes have been effected within the past year by Texans confined within its walls. They suffered much from want of food, water, and sufficient clothing in the mountains, but eventually arrived safely, either in the United States or Texas.



As the morning advanced towards daybreak, and a higher region was attained, the cold appeared to increase. The air was damp and disagreeable to a degree—a chill fog rested lazily in the lower atmosphere—it seemed as though we were cutting our way through frozen clouds. On reaching the high mountain hamlet of Las Vigas\* we were directly in the *tierra fria*, or cold country, at an elevation of nearly eight thousand feet above the level of the sea. The driver halted for some ten or fifteen minutes, but whether to change or water his horses I am unable to say: I only know that we dragged our benumbed limbs from the stage, and by dint of much shouting, pounding, kicking, and knocking were enabled to arouse a Mexican family from their slumbers and effect an entrance within doors. No other refreshment could we obtain than rank Catalan brandy, as it is called, strong as alcohol itself, and with the flavour of ley or a tea made of potash. With teeth chattering we called for coffee, chocolate—for something warm. “*No hai*,” was the chilling answer. We asked the stupid, half-asleep master of the dwelling if he could tell us where we could obtain the desired refreshments. The eternal “*Quien sabe?*” was the only rejoinder. How the inhabitants of Las Vigas obtain a livelihood is a mystery. Of course we could see nothing of the face of the country in the vicinity of the village; but judging from the feeling of the cold mountain air, it would seem impossible for even Greenland moss to withstand it—so keen, so cutting, so penetrating.

Muffling again in our blankets and cloaks, we entered the stage and resumed the journey. As the sun began to disperse the mists and fogs of morning we were awakened to a full realization of the wild mountain grandeur which surrounded us. We were already at an elevation several thousand feet higher than the loftiest summits of the United States; yet it seemed to us, as we gazed upward to the cloud-capped peaks, that we were at the base of huge, towering mountains, thrusting their lofty heads even into the very vault of heaven. As we commenced descending the rough and rocky road which

\* The literal translation of Las Vigas is *the beams or timbers*. The houses of the village are constructed of logs—the first and almost the only dwellings of the kind I saw in Mexico—a circumstance from which the place probably received its name.



leads down the lower mountain sides, the prospect below us was concealed by an immense sea of misty, cloudy vapour, reaching far as human vision could penetrate—looking back, the fog was still above us—it appeared as though we were travelling directly between two stratas of cloud. Such of the country as we could see immediately around us, bore evident marks of its volcanic formation. In one spot a huge mass of rock, evidently the upheaving of some strong throes of nature, was plainly visible; in another, a bed of hard, black lava, with the appearance of having been poured down in a liquid stream and of having cooled as it fell, gave farther evidence of the mighty convulsions nature has undergone in this wild region in bygone times and of the violent and tremendous efforts by which she has relieved herself of some burning, inward fever. The gnarled and stunted firs and oaks, which have found root among the different volcanic masses, show that they have wrestled powerfully for nourishment and growth.

With astonishment the traveller looks at the beds of lava, and masses of broken rock he sees on every side—so fresh and with such a seeming newness that he cannot imagine more than a few months, or years at farthest, to have rolled away since they were first deposited; yet even the oldest legends of the aborigines, their most remote traditions, carry him not back to the awful disruption which placed them there. The Indians point to the now extinct volcano upon the Cofre de Peroté as the point from which came the shower of burning lava and rocks that has rendered this section desolate, but offer no surmise as to the time when the crater belched forth its storm of destruction; and the mind, in attempting to trace the interval which has since elapsed, is soon lost in the wide and mazy fields of conjecture.

El Cofre de Peroté, or *the Chest of Peroté*—so called from the fact that its sides bear strong resemblance to a trunk or chest—was, ages since, a volcano, and the different volcanic formations over which we were now journeying were doubtless belched from its yawning but long-smothered crater. Awful must have been the throes, the mighty workings and convulsions, of the huge mass of mountains while in labour. Imagination shudders and turns pale, the mind is awe-stricken, as the immense rocks are reviewed by the eye—rocks which are of themselves hills, and which must have been quarried,



torn, riven, and hurled upward from the bowels of the earth by the elemental fever within, and, after roaring high in air, descended, amid streams of burning lava, a red-hot deluge of mighty fragments.

I have said that the Indians have no tradition of the time when this terrible convulsion occurred, but they relate a story of its causes and effects—a story which I will here insert for its singularity and simplicity. Previous to the first eruption, the mountain was fertile, peaceful, and well behaved as its brother mountains, and was the joint property of a deer, a tiger, a leopard, and a bear. For a long time these animals, so discordant in temperament, lived in the greatest amity together, each roaming over a particular section which was set apart for him, and never trespassing upon the land of his neighbour; but by-and-by the bear, either from lack of forage within his own specified limits, or from a natural proneness to interfere with the just rights of his neighbours, crossed, after the manner of certain governments of more recent times, the prescribed boundary lines, and made inroads upon the domain adjoining his own territory. The deer, the tiger, and the leopard, upon learning this trespass, held public consultation, and warned their neighbour of his encroachments and of their determination not to submit to outrages of the kind. The bear threw defiance in their teeth, and insisted upon roaming the mountain-sides at will; whereupon the deer, the tiger, and the leopard made common cause against a common enemy, joined their forces, and declared war at once. What part the deer took in this struggle is not related, but among them they drove, worried, and chased the bear from point to point, giving no rest to the soles of his feet until he reached the summit of the mountain, where they encompassed and beleaguered him about with the full intention of starving him into terms. But the bear was not to be thus hemmed in by his adversaries; so, bethinking him that there was no other means of escape, he commenced digging through the mountain with his paws, firmly determined upon working a passage to the lower side. Deeper and deeper did he force his way, toiling diligently, until at length he came upon the evil spirit Tlacatecolotl, who was lying asleep in an immense fire cave. Not aware of this new danger, the bear still pawed and dug away, and not until he had scratched the slumbering fiend upon the nose did he cease from his labour. Tlacatecolotl awoke from



his sleep, and instantly all was rumbling and commotion. The bear retreated upward; but the enraged fiend pursued him with a shower of fire, and drove him for succour to his former enemies. He hugged, with all love and familiarity, the deer, the tiger, and the leopard wherever he met them, and was successful in quieting their just displeasure; but the fury of this fire-fiend was not to be appeased. He pursued the bear with red-hot stones, with streams of burning lava, with an avalanche of fire—his rage waxed fiercer and more fierce—the fair mountain-sides were made lurid and made desolate with the implements of his strange revenge—and never did the torrent of destruction slacken until a good Indian shot the bear and ate him: then was the mighty wrath of Tlacatecolotl assuaged, and he retired once more to his bed of fire. Such is the marvellous tradition of the simple natives in relation to this long extinct volcano.

As we left the region of lava, the morning air became more mild, vegetation of more luxuriant growth took the place of the stunted pines and firs, and the ocean of vapour far below us began to dissipate under the influence of the sun. Turning our eyes back, we could see scudding masses of fog and cloud creeping up the mountain-sides, and fast hiding and dispersing themselves apparently among the clefts and fissures. The stage rattled more rapidly down the winding road, and at every step new beauties presented themselves. Every revolution of the wheels seemed to bring us into a new climate—each succeeding minute brought with it an air more bland and balmy. Birds of bright plumage were seen crossing the road, and fluttering from copse to copse of deep-green foliage, while here and there a rude dwelling, surrounded by a small patch of ground richly cultivated, relieved the rugged asperities of the mountain cliffs. So sudden is the transition, that a short hour conducts the traveller from bleak and dreary winter to bright and sunny spring—a winter which it seems to him is unchangeable, a spring which is eternal. At one moment, as it were, he is shivering, and rubbing his hands in the *tierras frias*—the next he is basking in the soft sunshine of the *tierras templadas*, or temperate lands, amid orange groves and flowers innumerable. A single day's travel in Mexico carries the traveller from the heat and verdure of unchanging summer, to the cold and sterile face of undying winter.

When within a few short miles of Jalapa, the morning



fog had entirely dispersed, the sun was out in all his splendour, and the ocean of cloud had given way to a vast expanse of green—we were looking down upon the *tierra caliente*, the land of summer's heat and summer's verdure. The driver halted for a few moments at the house of a Mexican lady, and allowed us to alight. We entered the dwelling, the front of which was almost concealed from view by creeping vines and different species of rose and other flowering bushes. The mistress of this sylvan retreat, a stout, handsome-faced woman, some thirty years of age, instantly beset us with inquiries in relation to some American she had known formerly—a colonel she called him, but the name I do not remember. His hair, features, size, and all were described with a minuteness which convinced us that his image still lingered in the memory of the fair questioner, but not one of us could give her information which seemed satisfactory. She kindly asked us to partake of refreshments; but mingled with her pressing invitations were farther inquiries about the colonel—thoughts of one, who evidently occupied a strong hold in her affections, never left her while there was a ray of hope that some one of us might possibly know him.

When we were again on the road, the driver informed us that for many years this woman had been earnest in her inquiries respecting the colonel. In her artless simplicity she had asked all foreigners alike for information—one whom she knew so well must surely be known by others—but had never been able to gather a gleam of intelligence of the long-lost one. Love, as a matter of course, was at the bottom—was the mainspring which actuated her in her inquiries. Some roving, blue-eyed, light-haired American had won her affections in early life, and those affections continue as warm as ever for the *guerro*, as she called him. In Mexico all light-haired men are termed *guerros*—yellow locks, blue eyes, and a fair complexion, are so uncommon, in that country, that the possession of them is a passport directly to the affections of the opposite sex. Among the celebrated beauties of Mexico, and one who held sway as a reigning belle for many years, was La Guerra Rodriguez, or *The Light-haired Rodriguez*: In Humboldt's time her empire over the hearts of all was supreme in Mexico; and although a beautiful and fascinating woman in every respect, much of her celebrity and ascendancy she owed to the circumstance of her having light



hair. She is still alive, I believe, and her society is still courted by all, although her light locks have long since faded.

From the residence of the Mexican lady at which we had called—a place where the driver stops to water his horses and allow her to press her questions—the road runs through a cultivated country until it reaches Jalapa, distant some three or four miles. It was Sunday, and the road was filled, chiefly with pedestrians, on their way to the city to mass, to market, or some merry-making. The air was richly perfumed with the fragrance of innumerable flowers—the roadside was bordered with that luxuriant vegetation which appears to belong to this climate. We were compelled to halt a few minutes at the garita to shew our passports—this examination over, we were again on the road, and in a short time were descending the steep declivity which has been chosen as the site for Jalapa. The stage wound slowly down the precipitous streets, passed through the crowded market-place, turned into the Calle Principal, and safely deposited us in the patio of the Casa de Diligencias in season for breakfast. We were now revelling in a soft and wooing climate, of spring-like temperature—two hours before we were shivering in an atmosphere which would freeze an Iclander.



## CHAPTER XXXIX.

**The Cracovienne.—Large Body of Mexican Troops.—Their Inefficiency.—Speculations as to the Result of an Invasion of Mexico.—The Vomito at Vera Cruz.—Determination to remain at Jalapa.—The Scotchman we had left at Puebla arrives.—Work of the Robbers.—Indian Girls from the Tierra Caliente.—Picturesque and neat Style of Dressing their Hair.—A pleasant Ride.—Departure from Jalapa.—Description of the Litera.—Changing Teams.—Mexican Drivers.—Puente Nacional.—Night Ride through the Hot Country.—Residence of Santa Anna.—Fireflies.—Santa Fé.—Number of Dogs in the Vicinity.—Singular District.—The Gulf of Mexico in Sight.—Arrival at Vera Cruz.—A Conducta.—Sopilotes.—The Black Vomito again.—Arrival on board the Woodbury.—Commodore Marin.—Salutes.—Under Way.—Pleasant Passage.—The Blaize in Sight.—Author's Leave of his Reader.**

WE had no sooner alighted from the stage, stretched our stiffened limbs, and attended well to the safety of our baggage, than the enlivening notes of the *Cracovienne*, played by a large and well-organized military band, reached our ears from without. On going to the front doors and balconies of the hotel, we ascertained that there was a full parade of all the regular troops then stationed at Jalapa, several thousands in number, and for half an hour we watched the solid platoons as they marched past. A majority of the men, although they were now cleaned up and had uniforms upon their backs, were doubtless ragged and wretched convicts but a few months before, and driven to the capital tied in strings. Such men, destitute alike of moral principle, pride, and that love of country which is a main requisite, can never be manufactured into effective soldiers under any discipline; but when to their natural deficiencies is added the fact that the majority of their officers are taken from the higher classes and placed at once at the heads of companies and regiments, without either theoretical or practical knowledge of arms, little need be expected from a force thus constituted. In case of a foreign invasion, such a force



could be crushed at once by one fourth the number of well-disciplined troops; but the invading army would encounter other difficulties than the meeting with such defenders. It is much easier to *say* that ten thousand well-appointed Americans or Englishmen can march from the seacoast directly to the city of Mexico than to *do* it. The ordinary troops of the country would offer but few obstacles, would be little in the way could they be brought to battle in the open field; the strong natural barriers against invasion in the shape of mountain fastnesses, a better class of troops to be met in the vicinity of the capital, the opposition of the hardy rancheros who would at once be drawn into the contest, combined with a religious phrensy which would doubtless be created and kept up by the priests—all these obstacles must be encountered on the road to Mexico. I do not say that they could not be surmounted—far from it—I only wish to offer the opinion that something more than mere holiday work might be expected by those who should set out on such an undertaking. Of the troops we saw that morning at Jalapa, a large portion have since perished—some at Vera Cruz, but the greater number in Yucatan, where they were either cut off in the vain attempt of Santa Anna to subdue his refractory subjects during the years '42 and '43, or by the malaria and dreaded sickness of that unhealthy climate.

On arriving at Jalapa, Judge Ellis found letters awaiting him which gave the information that the *vomito*, or yellow fever, had broken out on board the cutter Woodbury, the vessel in which we were to sail for New-Orleans, and which was then lying under the Castle of San Juan de Ulua at Vera Cruz. One or two of the officers, besides several of the men, were down with the disease, and as it was deemed imprudent to sail with it on board, Judge E. was advised to remain at Jalapa until farther intelligence should be sent him. Several of the passengers determined on proceeding at once to Vera Cruz, regardless of the fever; but the larger number remained behind, and took lodgings which the ex-minister procured for us at the hotel of an American.

On the arrival of the next stage from Puebla, we crowded around it to note the passengers and gather any intelligence that might be brought. There were but five travellers, three or four of them Mexican officers, and our Scotch friend for whom we could not make room the morning we left the "City of the Angels." His face wore a lugubriously comic



expression as he alighted from the diligence, while his vestments gave token of a change of wardrobe other than the difference of climate called for. Instead of the substantial blue cloth coat, of goodly dimensions and excellent preservation, which had graced his upper man when we left him standing by his trunk, his arms and shoulders were now tightly encased within a yellow Nankin short jacket, a world too small, while his head was partially covered by a queer hat much the worse for wear. He recognized us immediately, and with a face half-sorrowful, half-upbraiding, exclaimed, "You see me," at the same time turning himself round so that we could be brought to a full realization of his unfortunate plight. "I told you so," he continued, "I knew it—I said so at first. Talk about Scotch mists—I came near perishing this morning on the mountains—greatcoat and all are gone." Not one word did he say about robbers; yet his broken sentences and forlorn appearance told plainly enough that he had fallen into the hands of highwaymen. After a little, he related the particulars of his having been robbed a few miles from Puebla. The brigands had an easy task, as save himself there was no foreigner in the coach. The passengers, one and all, were compelled to lie down with their faces to the earth, were stripped of everything valuable in the shape of money and clothing, and then allowed to proceed. In telling his story, the Scotchman mixed up with his discourse hearty and abundant curses against the Mexicans in general and the ladrones in particular, concluding with the remark that if he was once more fortunate enough to see his own native hills he would not be caught in outlandish parts again; but the most amusing feature of it was, the pride he appeared to take in his powers of divination—in the fact of his having told us, at Puebla, that he should be robbed, and the event turning out precisely as he had anticipated.

We passed some week or ten days at Jalapa, and pleasantly, too; for nothing can exceed the balminess and spring-like beauties of its climate, the exceeding richness of its endless variety of fruits, the delicious fragrance of its atmosphere, which is loaded with the perfume of innumerable flowers, or the picturesque views and romantic rides which abound in its vicinity. Pine-apples, gathered from the stem ripe and of most luscious flavour, can be purchased for a trifle, and in this pure climate eaten without fear of consequences. Chirimoyas here arrive at their full perfection, bananas, such



as I have never seen elsewhere, grow in most lavish profusion, while all the fruits of the tropics appear to be found in abundance. Often did I watch a party of Indian girls from the tierra caliente below, sitting upon the sidewalk opposite the Casa de Diligencias, selling, for a few coppers, plums of rare and delicious quality. Their loose dress seemed peculiarly adapted to the climate, and would of itself attract not a little attention from the foreigner; but their rich, bright olive complexions, their dark, mild eyes, and luxuriant hair, of glossy blackness and reaching nearly to the ground, formed their principal attractions. Upon their hair they bestow all their care and attention, and justly are they proud of it. Their mode of dressing this ornamental appendage is peculiarly their own. Two long braids, reaching nearly to the ground, fall from the back of the head, while two other braids, after circling the head twice, are fastened in front, with a rose or some other flower confined at the point where the ends meet. These braids are composed of two strands of hair and one of red cord or riband, neatly platted, lending an additional beauty to their otherwise picturesque appearance. Their dress is simple enough, consisting of a petticoat of some woollen stuff, without an under garment of any description; but in place of the latter they wear an oblong piece of cotton or linen cloth, elaborately ornamented, in many cases, with needlework, over their shoulders as a protection from the sun. Directly in the centre a hole is cut, large enough to admit the head—thus is this singular garment worn, and it certainly has a cool and comfortable appearance in a warm climate, if nothing more.

We were told that the girls lived at a village several leagues below Jalapa, a romantic situation upon the borders of a clear and swift stream, in which they bathe and wash their hair twice a day. The males are described as lazy, worthless, drunken fellows, living entirely upon the industry of the women; but the latter are invariably cleanly, frugal, laborious, and, singular enough for this country, virtuous. We intended paying their village a visit before we came away, for we heard many stories of its surpassing beauty of location; but some circumstance which I have now forgotten prevented us. A party of us, however, had a pleasant ride to another Indian town several leagues below Jalapa. It was during this excursion that I for the first time saw the coffee



plant, the pineapple, the vanilla bean, and other products of the tropics, under cultivation, as also the weed from which the nauseous jalap, that medicine which has given this place a name, is extracted. The view of the city from several points below, as it stands boldly out on the mountain side at an elevation of more than four thousand feet above the level of the sea, is peculiarly picturesque. The towering Cofre de Peroté, rising high in air, affords a majestic background to the view, while still higher, and with its snow-capped summit apparently reaching the blue vault of heaven itself, the traveller catches an occasional view of Orizava as some opening in the trees allows the eye full scope to the southward.

On the 8th of May, after passing, as I have already mentioned, several days very pleasantly at Jalapa, Judge Ellis received intelligence from Vera Cruz that the vomito had left the Woodbury, and that everything was in readiness for her instant departure. The following day, therefore, saw us once more in the diligence and on our road homeward. While at Jalapa, I had several times noticed the arrival and departure of the *literas*, and had intended to take a seat, or rather a couch, in one of these easy vehicles; but as my passage had been paid in the diligence, and as the latter ran through in less time, I was compelled to give up all thought of being thus transported. The litera is a box some six or seven feet long by about four in width, with a top and covering somewhat resembling that of a common Jersey wagon. Within is a mattress of sufficient width to accommodate two passengers, with pillows and other comforts. The box is placed upon two long shafts or poles, which are lifted from the ground and securely fastened to the saddles of a pair of mules, one at either end of the litera. When everything is in readiness, the passenger has nothing to do but climb into his quarters, where he can sit, lie, sleep, read, or smoke, as may best please him. I certainly envied a gentleman whom I saw one morning, half-lying upon his back in an easy posture, with a book in his hand and a cigar in his mouth. He seemed the very personification of comfort.

As we rattled through the principal street of Jalapa, and crossed a little stream, which dashes through the city, the eyes of all, but more particularly those of a group of washing



girls,\* were drawn towards us; for the top and sides of the stage were ornamented with bird-cages, flower-pots, plants of different descriptions, fruits, of which we had laid in or on a goodly store, besides many usefals and ornamentals which had been picked up and collected by the different members of our party. One gentleman in particular, of much taste in such matters, had purchased an assortment of tropical birds and plants, so that when we were in motion, the diligence bore close resemblance to a travelling aviary set in the midst of a floating botanical garden. No wonder, then, that we attracted more than usual attention.

In half an hour we left the outskirts of the city—a city so celebrated for its delightful climate, its delicious fruits, and its pretty women—and began gradually to descend the mountains towards the tierra caliente. At the first place where we changed teams we met the stage from Vera Cruz. Among the passengers was Mr. Dorsey, just arrived from the United States with despatches for General Thompson, and on his way to the city of Mexico. Instead of one Yankee we now had two Mexican drivers for the diligence—instead of horses, the animals attached were a set of tolerably well-behaved mules. One of the drivers acted as postilion, riding upon a mule in the lead; the other sat upon the box, and appeared to have his hands full in so managing the wheel mules as to prevent an upset. The road, in many places, is extremely rough and uneven, and that we should meet with some serious accident appeared inevitable; but darkness came and we were yet safe, and as it was now impossible to see the dangers which beset our path, we gradually became more reconciled. In this way we passed Encero, Plan del Rio, with other small hamlets the names of which, if they have any, are forgotten. I recollect the crossing of the heavy bridge called, since the revolution, Puente Nacional, and of seeing the large village near it.†

\* There are one or two establishments in Jalapa devoted entirely to the washing of clothes, at which numerous girls can be seen at all times working under the shelter of a roof, but in a building which has no sides. So white, and with such care do these girls get up linen, that it was told us they received custom even from Vera Cruz.

† Several of the Texan prisoners, who were released by Santa Anna in the June following, died of yellow fever, and were buried near this bridge. Among them were Doctor Whittaker and Lieutenant Seavy. Captain Holliday died of the same disease on his passage from Vera Cruz to Galveston.



At a fonda by the roadside we obtained a very fair supper, and saw a very pretty girl—the circumstance that the chairs, which the Mexican landlord had provided for the accommodation of his foreign customers, were so low that to sit in them while eating was extremely tiresome, is another souvenir brought from this place.

We were now directly in the heart of the *tierra caliente*—amid the rank vegetation, the deadly malaria, the suffocating heat of the hot, tropical climates. Innumerable fireflies or bugs, of large size, and shedding a pale but brilliant light, were flitting about in the bushes by the roadside, and illuminating the dense masses of creeping vines with which the forests of the warm countries abound. At midnight, or a little after, we were travelling through the immense estate of Santa Anna, Manga de Clavo I think it is called. To this place he has always retired after his reverses, and here, it is said, all his plans for his own political advancement have been formed. About three o'clock in the morning we reached the village of Santa Fé, and while the driver was changing his animals we awakened two or three families in the hope of obtaining chocolate or some other refreshment. Nothing could we procure save a bottle of bad claret, and a draught of Catalan brandy, which was worse. It is impossible to form an opinion, with anything like certainty, of the number of dogs that enjoyed the pleasure of barking at us during the ten minutes we passed at Santa Fé; but a rough calculation would set down at least ten to every door, and five to every yard.

As the sun rose, we were ploughing our way through a dreary region of deep sand, the land on either side of the road overrun with weeds and bushes of rankest growth. Flocks of screaming parrots and macaws were flying lazily over head, while birds of red, green, and richly-variegated plumage were crossing the road, and fluttering among the bushes in every direction. After passing the rude huts of several negro families, who must here gain but a scanty subsistence, we at length emerged from this strange sandy region. A single turn of the road, and we were directly upon the beach of the Gulf of Mexico—we had left the hot and pestilential air of the sultry lands, and were inhaling the pure breeze from the ocean. Thus in one night had we passed entirely through the *tierra caliente*, and almost without seeing it. To be sure, we had beheld the rude



bamboo or cane huts of the inhabitants, hardly one degree removed from the wigwam of the wildest Indian;\* we had inhaled the indolent breezes which come loaded with the perfume of endless varieties of flowers; we had seen myriads of bright fireflies in all their midnight splendour—but we had not seen all that we had hoped to see in a region, which, to use an Irish expression, is running over with parrots, bananas, pineapples, monkeys, and other tropical fruits.

From the point where we first struck the low, sandy beach, although it must have been five miles distant, we could plainly see the churches, houses, and even the walls which environ Vera Cruz. The drive along the water's edge was slow and tedious, for the wheels of the diligence sank deep, and the sun, although but an hour risen from his cool bed in the gulf, was pouring down a flood of such heat as is only to be felt upon this unprotected sandy shore. While yet a mile intervened between us and the city, we could see innumerable *sopilotes*, or Mexican buzzards, standing moodily and solemnly upon the walls, housetops, and different towers and steeples, their eyes turned watchfully downward, on the look out for their accustomed food.

\* This may not be a fitting place, but it may be here mentioned that since the earlier part of this work was stereotyped the author has had several conversations with Mr. Gregg, in relation to the Waco Indians, in which that gentleman has expressed his decided conviction that the pretended Wacos were no other than a band of Cherokees, driven either from the main tribe in the United States for some misdemeanor, or a part of the band defeated in Eastern Texas at the time when the noted chief Bowles was killed. From the great knowledge Mr. G. has of the Southwestern Indians, the author is satisfied that he is correct. He describes the Wacos, among whom he has travelled, as not being so far advanced in civilisation as to warrant the belief that they are now living in the comfortable quarters described in the account of the village seen by the Santa Fé pioneers. The fact that they said they were Wacos is no evidence, as lying is a prominent trait with all Indians. I might also add, in this note, that the name "Salezar" has not been rightly given in the earlier part of the narrative. Anxious to do that worthy all justice, I would here state that the true orthography is *Damasio Salazar*. He shall not say that I have robbed him of any fame by spelling his name wrong.

Mr. Gregg is shortly to publish a work upon the prairies and the Northern Mexican settlements, which, from his great experience and information, must throw a flood of light upon one of the dark corners of the earth.



They are the scavengers of the city, and are never molested. On reaching the gate, around which a crowd of soldiers were lounging, a short detention sufficed with the officer stationed there, to grant us permission to enter. A large *conducta*, or escort guarding nearly a million of dollars in silver, was entering the city at the same time. A drive of some fifteen minutes, through the wide and well-built streets, brought us to the principal hotel of the place, where we were soon safely housed.

We were not long in learning that the much-dreaded black vomit was still raging in the city, although it had left the Woodbury. The stranger, as he looks through the comparatively clean and airy thoroughfares of Vera Cruz, and sees the wide waters of the Gulf of Mexico lying directly before him, is at a loss to account for the sickness which yearly carries to the grave its hundreds of victims. The low and damp region, through a part of which we had passed in the morning, is the section whence come the noxious miasmas that generate the vomito. The friends who had preceded us from Jalapa were fortunately all well when we reached Vera Cruz, although some of them had suffered from the effects of the climate.

Our stay in the infected city was short, the next morning seeing us all on board the cutter; but I cannot take my leave of Vera Cruz without expressing my warmest thanks to Mr. Hargous, the then acting American consul, as well as to the countrymen I met at his residence, for the many acts of kindness and attention I received at their hands. The liberality of the Americans of this place, as hundreds of my unfortunate comrades can testify, was ever active in alleviating their wants and sorrows.

Previous to the sailing of the Woodbury, a salute was fired by her commander, Captain Nones, in honour of Judge Ellis and of Mr. Hargous, as well as of the then chief of the Mexican navy, Commodore Marin, who was on board at the time. The salute was answered from the barque Ann Louisa, an American packet then in port under command of Captain Clifford. After Commodore Marin had left the Woodbury and reached his own vessel, the Libertad, another salute was fired by him, which was duly returned by the cutter. These ceremonies over, we got under way with a fair breeze, and before nightfall nothing could be seen of the low coast upon which stands the once rich and populous



city of Vera Cruz, or the True Cross, or of the frowning Castle of San Juan de Ulua, which commands the harbour—the towering peak of Orizava, rising far in the distance, was the only point of Mexico visible.

It was on the 12th of May that the cutter Woodbury sailed from La Villa Rica de la Vera Cruz, as the Spaniards were wont to call this city in the proud days of her prosperity. To the commander of our vessel, Captain Nones, as well as to Lieutenants Peters, Wilson, and Faunce, we were all under great obligations, and I cannot let the opportunity pass without an expression of thanks for their kindness. On the morning of the 18th of May, exactly one year from the date when I left it so full of expectation of a pleasant four months' excursion, the low coast which surrounds the mouths of the mighty Mississippi appeared in sight—we had reached the Balize.

And here, after begging pardon of my reader for sending him ashore at a point so desolate and dreary, I must take my leave. For one year we have journeyed together through scenes of varied nature. If his random recollections of travel have served to beguile an idle hour, to interest and amuse the reader who has accompanied him, the knowledge of it will more than compensate the author for his many dark days of privation and suffering upon the prairies, and the months of captivity he shared with his companions in Mexico.

THE END.